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by

Stuart James Munro

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To My Parents

ABSTRACT

The following discussion is a commentary on Plato's *Laches*. According to tradition, the *Laches* is "On Courage." Yet the dialogue itself offers grounds for questioning this opinion, for the discussion of courage is brief and apparently inconclusive, and, stranger still, the conversation presented in the dialogue seems to be occupied with other matters for fully half of its length. This thesis attempts to demonstrate that the traditional understanding of the dialogue is correct, that the *Laches*, in its entirety, is indeed on courage, and to explicate the dialogue's teaching concerning that virtue.

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How much truth does a spirit *endure*, how much truth does it *dare*? . . . Error (faith in the ideal) is not blindness, error is *cowardice*. . . . Every attainment, every step forward in knowledge, *follows* from courage, from hardness against oneself, from cleanliness in relation to oneself.

--Friedrich Nietzsche

I. INTRODUCTION

Plato's dialogue the *Laches* has come down to us with the subtitle "On Courage" (Peri Andreias); this suggests that it is the Platonic consideration of courage. At first glance, this understanding seems correct, for courage does seem to be the dominant theme of the dialogue. Yet, if courage is indeed the theme of the *Laches*, it receives a rather strange treatment; if we turn to the dialogue expecting it to tell us "what courage is," we may well come away disappointed and rather puzzled. For not only does the dialogue not directly answer the question which it poses, but the explicit consideration of courage is rather brief, and appears to be incomplete; and, perhaps strangest of all, the question "what is courage," to which this dialogue is supposedly devoted, is not even raised until exactly half-way through the dialogue. Surely the thoughtful reader is meant to wonder why the Platonic dialogue on courage is cast in this most peculiar form.

The following discussion attempts to provide at least some illumination concerning this and other questions posed by the dialogue. It proceeds on the assumption that the *Laches*, in its entirety, is indeed "on courage," that everything that occurs in the dialogue is meant to contribute something to our understanding of this virtue. Hence, it assumes that a Platonic dialogue constitutes a coherent whole, and consequently, that everything that is said and done--as well as what is not said and not done--has a philosophic purpose. In short, it takes seriously what Leo Strauss terms "the law of logographic necessity": "Nothing is accidental in a Platonic dialogue; everything is necessary at the place where it occurs."[1] Accordingly, it is presented in what seems to be the form most suited to this law of interpretation, the commentary. It begins at the beginning of the dialogue, and attempts to follow the movement, the *logos*, of the dialogue to its conclusion. It is appropriate to begin with a few brief remarks about the dialogue's setting and participants.

The Characters

Lysimachus and Melesias are presented as a pair in the dialogue, as old friends who spend a good deal of their time together, and part of the reason why Plato chose to present them in the *Laches* may be their similarity and the similarity of their backgrounds. We know almost nothing about them, other than what is presented in the *Laches*.[2] They

are presented as very old in the dialogue, and as about the same age. Both were the sons of prominent Athenian statesmen: Lysimachus, of Aristides, still known to us as "the Just," and Melesias, of Thucydides. Although each father played a leading role in Athenian politics in his time, each was overshadowed by a political rival. Aristides was a contemporary and the principal rival of Themistocles (ca. 528-462 BC), the man who laid the groundwork for the Athenian empire. He was one of the Athenian *strategoi* at Marathon (490) and Salamis (480), and apparently commanded the Athenian army at Plataea (479); thus, he took part in all of the decisive battles in the Persian wars. He was also partly responsible for the organization of the Delian confederacy against the Persians in 478. As a result of his opposition to Themistocles, he was ostracised in 482, and subsequently recalled from exile in 480 with the reappearance of the Persian threat. He is thought to have died around 468.

Thucydides, the father of Melesias, was the principal political rival of Pericles (ca. 495-429), perhaps the greatest Athenian figure of which we know. He charged Pericles with misappropriating tribute from the from the Delian confederacy for Pericles' building program; the result was his ostracism in 443. He apparently served the statuatory exile of ten years; little is heard of him after 443, although he was apparently prosecuted as late as 426.

Both of these famous fathers, then, suffered major defeats at the hands of their political opponents.

The Sons are also presented as a pair in the dialogue; they are also explicitly linked in the *Theages*. We know as little about them as we know about their fathers. We gain no information about them in the dialogue, except that they have both been given their grandfathers' names, and that they are "about the age to be educated," hence, around fifteen years old.

Nicias (ca. 470-413) was apparently renowned for his piety, wealth, caution, and integrity. He was a leading general and statesman during the first nineteen years of the Peloponnesian war; he is best known, of course for his role in the disastrous Sicilian expedition, which Nicias himself opposed. He was prominent during the early years of the

war, and led the "moderate oligarchic" party against Cleon; when Cleon died, he was looked to as the leading political man in Athens. Cleon's death enabled him to pursue the policy that resulted in the short-lived peace with Sparta that bears his name, the "Peace of Nicias" of 421. In subsequent years, he was rivalled by Alcibaides, with whom he was later, along with Lamachus, to lead the Sicilian campaign. He and his troops were captured in Sicily in 413 after he led an unsuccessful attempt to flee the enemy; he was subsequently executed by his captors.

Laches is less known to us than Nicias, and this seem to be in accord with the position which he occupied in Athenian politics. He was apparently considered to be a competent general, and shared the command of several campaigns during the early years of the Peloponnesian war. While Nicias died in retreat, Laches died in battle at Mantinaea in 418; the battle ended in defeat for the Athenians, a defeat for which Laches was apparently responsible. We have no record of his date of birth; the dialogue implies that he is about the same age as Nicias.[3]

The Setting

The dialogue takes place during the middle years of the Peloponnesian war: sometime between the battle at Delium in 424, and Laches' death in the battle at Mantinaea in 418. The martial virtue, then, is discussed with the fateful struggle between the two Greek cities, Sparta and Athens, as its backdrop. The conversation occurs in a public place, a gymnasium, immediately following the display of a certain novel technique of fighting in armour; the participants in the conversation have just viewed the display. As such, it is possible that, at least during part of the conversation, the participants are in the midst of other men, and perhaps other groups of men who, like they, are discussing the merits of the novel fighting art. The conversation, with one exception, is not the result of chance, but has been previously arranged: Lysimachus and Melesias have invited Nicias and Laches to observe the display with them in order to gain the generals' advice as to whether the martial skill will make a worthwhile contribution to the education of their sons. The fortunate exception is Socrates' apparently unplanned participation in the discussion. Since the conversation is occasioned by the purpose of viewing a display of the fighting

art, it is likely that it takes place in the light of day.

The dialogue is not narrated but performed; the reader "sees" the deeds and speeches of the participants, rather than listening to a speech about them.

II. COMMENTARY

178a-181d: Formation of the Deliberative Community

The first words in the dialogue are spoken by Lysimachus, who, with one exception, speaks on behalf of both himself and his friend Melesias throughout the discussion. He initiates the consultation with the generals by informing Nicias and Laches of its purpose, their reasons for approaching the generals, and the circumstances behind their need of such advice. He begins with what he labels a preface. When they invited the generals to view the display of the fighting art with them, they did not tell the generals why they wished them to view it; now, however, they shall, for they think that they should speak frankly. Lysimachus' frankness is dictated by the end which he has in mind: a man seeking advice will, in his opinion, gain the best advice by speaking frankly rather than dissembling about his intention. But the end may call for a lack of frankness as well: Lysimachus' frankness begins only "now"; he was not frank prior to the display, although he is now frank about that lack of frankness. The display was presumably aimed at showing "in deed" that the fighting art is one worth learning; Lysimachus said nothing so as to let what the generals observed "speak for itself."

Lysimachus, then, is willing to be frank to the extent to which his end seems to him to dictate it. But his preface indicates that he is only willing to be frank with men whom he regards as trustworthy, who are willing to reciprocate his frankness. For some men, he says, ridicule such requests for advice, and if one consults with them, they do not say what they think, but second-guess the one consulting and say other things against their own opinion. He and Melesias have approached the generals because they think both that Nicias and Laches are capable of knowing and that they will state their opinions simply. We may suspect that Lysimachus speaks from experience here; perhaps he and his friend have already approached others and have been met with such ridicule. If so, it seems that this has not been sufficient to deter them from attempting to obtain the advice which they desire; instead, it has led them to be forethoughtful not only about the advisor's competence, but about his trustworthiness as well. In the old men's eyes, Nicias and Laches satisfy both conditions, but Lysimachus does not say <u>why</u> he and his friend believe so. His silence raises the question of the grounds upon which they have made these

judgements: how does one, recognizing that he himself is in need of advice, determine that another possesses the knowledge which he lacks, and that the knower is willing to share with another the benefits of the knowledge which he possesses?

The reasons behind both of these judgements become somewhat more clear when Lysimachus turns to explaining the end of the consultation. The consultation is for the sake of the old men's sons, whom Lysimachus now introduces to the generals, making a point of mentioning their lineage. It is their opinion that they ought to take care of their sons as much as possible, rather than acting like the many who, when their sons have become lads, let them loose to do what they wish. Knowing that the generals also have sons, they thought that these men, if anyone, must have been concerned with how their sons should be attended to so as to become best, but if they have not often turned their mind to this, Lysimachus and Melesias now remind them that it must not be neglected, and they summon the generals to devote some care in common with them to young Aristides and Thucydides. Lysimachus' statements here reveal that he is not entirely confident that Nicias and Laches will speak simply, or rather, they reveal that he believes that the generals will speak simply once he has spoken in such a way as to ensure that they will do so. Again, his speech has not been entirely frank, for he said only that he thought that the generals would speak simply; the need for advisors who will speak in this way has called not for frankness but for dissembling on Lysimachus' part. Though he claims that he believes that the generals, "if anyone," are likely to have paid attention to this matter, his undisguised opinion appears to be exactly the opposite of what he says; one is tempted to accuse him of "second-guessing" the generals by saying things against his own opinion. For whether or not the many characteristically neglect their sons, Lysimachus apparently thinks that those who are conspicuous for doing this are not the many, but the few; such neglect, he tells the generals momentarily, is responsible for his own obscurity, and that of his friend as well. Lysimachus' attempt to ensure the generals' frank speech rests upon his assumption that these men too have likely paid little attention to the care of their sons; his aim is to give them some reason to begin to care. Hence, after indicating the purpose of the consultation, Lysimachus informs the generals that it is necessary for them to hear how he and Melesias came to have the opinion that they ought to care for their sons as much as possible. Lysimachus says, without elaborating, that this is necessary, as

he earlier said, without elaborating, that he believed the generals to know and to be trustworthy. What follows is not information that an advisor would need in order to give good advice; it is "necessary" because it indicates the consequences of failing to care for one's son. If the generals neglect their sons, their sons will end up like Lysimachus and Melesias. Lysimachus is frank about this, as he emphasizes: he speaks what for him must be the painful truth about his condition, and in doing so, levels a serious charge against his own father. If Nicias and Laches neglect their sons, he implies, they will be open to similar blame, and indeed, will show themselves to share at least one characteristic with the many. But of equal or more importance, their own names will be disgraced by their sons: their own reputations, which they have made in managing the affairs of others, may well be tarnished should they neglect the management of their own affairs. Lysimachus pointedly mentions what seems at first glance to be something utterly irrelevant to his account of the old men's resolve: he and Melesias take their meals together (179b7-8).[4] The implication is that they do so in a public place, perhaps even at the prytaneum, in the midst of men like Nicias and Laches.[5] It is here that they speak about their fathers' noble deeds, and about their own ignoble condition, for which they blame their fathers; the disgrace to their father's names, and their father's responsibility for this, are common knowledge.

The generals, then, ought to be concerned about the education of their sons, not only for the sons' sake--which, according to Lysimachus, does not seem of itself to be sufficient to induce such care on the part of most political men--but for their own sakes as well. And the old men's request provides them with the perfect opportunity to turn their minds to this by caring in common with the old men for Aristides and Thucydides. Now, Lysimachus' tactics may well cause the generals to become concerned about these things, if indeed they are not already; whether they are sufficient to inducing the generals to join a community aimed at caring for his son is another question. Lysimachus and Melesias are motivated by a concern not for all sons, but for their sons, for whom they desire the ability to excell politically, to "accomplish noble deeds in war and peace, managing the affairs of the city" (179c). But politics is inherently agonistic: indeed, these men's own fathers spent a good deal of their political lives involved in factional struggles with prominent opponents--Thucydides contra Themistocles, and Aristides contra Pericles--and the records which we possess suggest that both fathers emerged only

second-best. The old men require a community such as Lysimachus proposes in order to care for their sons; the generals, whom the old men believe to be capable of knowing about education, do not. Can Lysimachus be sure that these men, whom he is now exhorting to care for their own, will be willing to lend their aid to young men who may turn out to be their sons' future competitors? The generals might be encouraged to do so by an appeal based upon the needs or the good of the city; the city's welfare requires the capable men of which Lysimachus speaks. But Lysimachus says nothing about the city's good, and much about that of himself and his own; his concerns are essentially private; he gives the generals no good reason not to show a corresponding concern for their own. If the generals turn out to be willing to advise Lysimachus, their willingness may in the end be based not upon the "compelling reasons" which Lysimachus thinks that he has advanced, but on nothing so much as their public-spiritedness, and good will towards fellow citizens.

Such considerations notwithstanding, Lysimachus appears to think that his speech will be sufficient to persuade the generals to concern themselves with education. But why does he think that they are knowing, or capable of knowing, as he puts it, in the first place? Lysimachus looks to Nicias and Laches as men who have themselves become best; as such, he presumes that they will know how another can become like them. A good practitioner is *ipso facto* a good teacher if he simply wants to be; all that such a man need do is "turn his mind" to the question of education. For Lysimachus, then, the mark of the knower is possession of deeds; and in turn, the mark of the man with deeds is reputation. Like the many whom he disparages, Lysimachus looks to the reputable political men of his city as the best men, and he does not regard the relation between nobility and reputation as in any way problematic. On the contrary, for Lysimachus reputation is an accurate reflection of deeds or nobility precisely because it is the just reward for deeds or nobility: Lysimachus states that he feels shame not because he has no deeds, but because he has no deeds to tell of; he expresses concern not that his son will lack deeds, but that he will be without fame. Lysimachus' failure to adequately separate both teaching and practice, and reputation and nobility, sheds much light on his complaint about the response with which he has been met by some of those whom he has approached for advice. Lysimachus has approached these reputable political men with the opinion that because they are reputable, they can be assumed to be knowing about education, and if what he says to Nicias and

Laches is any indication, he has made this opinion quite clear to those whom he has approached. Now, this being the case, might not such men be reluctant to admit that they do not feel confident to advise about education? For to admit this would be to raise questions about their reputations; if knowing how to educate is implied by one's excellence as a practitioner, to deny that one possesses the former would be to deny that one possesses the latter as well. Lysimachus, because he fails to separate these things, does not see that this very view makes it hard for those whom he has approached to deny with any grace that they are able to advise him; the second-guessing which Lysimachus sees as an attempt to ridicule him might well be an attempt by these men to extricate themselves from the uncomfortable position in which Lysimachus places them.

Lysimachus is thus inattentive to the question of the relation between competence to practice and ability to transmit that competence to another. His speech shows that he is also inattentive to another issue which is necessarily raised by his project: the role of nature and chance in "becoming best." Lysimachus is motivated to care for his son by the stinging awareness that he himself has not lived up to his name or ancestry; he regards the natural capacity for excellence as based in origins or descent and, faced with the perennial problem of the son of a famous father, who is expected to live up to his father's name simply because he is his father's son, he can conceive of no other reason for his failure to do so than that his father neglected the nurture which such a nature requires.[6] Lysimachus' very origins--aided perhaps by an understandable reluctance to seriously examine this question--leave him insufficiently aware of the possibility that his own nature is to a much greater extent a matter of chance. And, of course, the same belief applies to his son's nature as well: Lysimachus can presume "good blood" and hence focus entirely on the question of the nurture required by such a nature. Yet Lysimachus also appears to hold the contradictory notion that natural capacities apart from those based in descent are required if a son is to benefit from education. He says that when he relates his own circumstances and the cause behind them to his son, he points out that if his son neglects himself and does not obey his father, he too may be without fame.[7] But does this not presuppose a certain natural disposition on the part of the boy, in addition to his hereditary endowment?[8] Lysimachus seems to treat it as such in expressing a concern for the possibility that his son may neglect himself: Thucydides' good breeding does not

guarantee that he will be willing to learn and to make the efforts which education calls for.[9]

Having explained these things to the generals, Lysimachus now tells them the immediate purpose of their gathering. He and Melesias are looking into the question of what their sons should learn or practise so as to become as good as possible. "Someone" suggested the fighting in armour as a noble learnable, praised the one whom they have just viewed, and urged the old men to view him. They decided to do so, and to take the generals along both as fellow-spectators and as counsellors and partners, "if they wish," in the care of their sons. The generals' part is the following: to give counsel about whether this learnable must be learned or not, to indicate any other learnable or practice which they are able to praise for a young man, and to say what they will do about the old men's proposed partnership.

The generals, then, are to judge of the learnable's nobility, and by this Lysimachus means its utility in producing the ability to act nobly; the knowledge which this learnable constitutes is not valued for its own sake, but for what will come from putting it into practise. But what exactly are the generals to judge of? Lysimachus' conflation of practitioner and teacher suggests that he and Melesias view the man displaying his art as a possible teacher for their sons; it is for this reason that they placed such a premium upon viewing his display. But he asks the generals to advise not about this man's abilities as a teacher, but about the worth of learning his art. Again, Lysimachus is unaware of the problems associated with the kind of request which he is making: first, whether this praiseworthy practitioner is as praiseworthy a teacher, and second, whether this learnable does not presuppose a certain level of natural ability, especially if one is to distinguish oneself in it. Now, military experts might well be expected to be capable of judging from a display of this kind whether a martial art is technically sound, but such a display would surely not provide sufficient grounds upon which to decide these other questions. Yet Lysimachus has asked the generals to judge of the worth of this learnable on the basis of a single and, no doubt, carefully orchestrated display. But perhaps he intends that the generals discuss these considerations, based upon their viewing. It seems not: his expectation that the generals will speak "simply," combined with his request that they praise any other learnable or practise which they know of, suggests that he expects the

generals simply to state that this learnable should, or should not, be learned by the boys. To the extent that these questions are obscured by Lysimachus, they would seem to pose serious obstacles to his gaining the end which he seeks; and insofar as their clarification requires some awareness and consideration of them on his part, it seems that frankness alone is not sufficient in the case of advisee as well as advisor.

The old men do not ask the generals to advise simply about this learnable, but about any other of which they are aware as well. The contribution of the fighting in armour to the boys' education is presumably a technical competence in combat, and the question of the role of such ability in becoming best is unclear. Lysimachus speaks of noble deeds in war and peace, managing the affairs of the city; how does a martial skill contribute to this? Deeds performed in individual combat may bring a man a good deal of honor; is such a learnable valuable for this reason, or because learning it also or primarily contributes to the ability to manage the affairs of the city in war, or peace, or both? Lysimachus seems content to leave these questions, if he is aware of them, to the generals, since they are presumed to be examples of the best men. On that basis, they are also presumed to be knowledgeable about the whole of education, including the roles and contributions of the particular learnables and practises which education comprises. And he might well be content to do so, because what he is really after, as he indicates in concluding his speech, is not simply that the generals advise concerning the fighting in armour, and about any other learnables with which they might be familiar, but that they form a community with the old men devoted to the care of their sons, which is to say, that they in effect take over responsibility for the education of young Aristides and Thucydides.[10] That Lysimachus proposes such a community would seem only sensible; after all, he is concerned with the education of his son in its entirety, and in his view, Nicias and Laches are men who are knowing about education as a whole; the alternative seems to be to provide for the sons' education in a piecemeal fashion. But on the other hand, this must surely up the stakes from the generals' point of view: it is one thing to proffer advice concerning a particular learnable, and quite another to accept responsibility for educating another man's son, and, moreover, for educating his son in such a way that he becomes best or outstanding, which is exactly what the old men expect will result from such education.

Nonetheless, both generals indicate their readiness to join the proposed partnership. Neither sees fit to raise any questions concerning what Lysimachus has just said; both apparently feel they have an adequate understanding of what it is that the old men want; nothing prevents them from engaging in deliberation in common with Lysimachus and Melesias.[11] However, neither offers any specific advice to Lysimachus at this point. Instead, each in turn comments on what Lysimachus has said, and with these initial comments, we see differences between the two distinguished leaders begin to emerge. Nicias simply praises Lysimachus' intention, i.e., the care of private things. But rather than proceeding on his own to meet Lysimachus' request, he waits to see what Laches intends to do: his supposition about Laches' intention calls for a response from Laches about his intention. Laches, on the other hand, praises what Lysimachus has said concerning his father's neglect of the private things.[12] Whether Laches praises this as an accurate prescription or merely as an accurate description is not clear; at the least, he surely indicates that he is primarily, if not solely, concerned with the things of the city. He extends Lysimachus' judgement to "all those who are busy with the things of the city;" he makes no distinction between this or that city. For Laches we may say that the primary distinction introduced by the city is not the regime, but that between public and private, between those who are busy with the things of the city and those who are not. But not all who are busy with the things of the city are inattentive to the private things; although Laches explicitly includes Nicias in his characterization of political men, Nicias will indicate shortly that he has found time to care for his son.[13] Laches appears to regard his own attitude towards these matters as characteristic of all political men, and in his mind, it seems, the public things not only tend to replace the private things for such men, but ought to.[14]

Nicias' initial utterance was brief and hesitant; before proceeding, he waited to see what Laches intended to do. Laches not only has much more to say than Nicias, but does not hesitate to suggest that a new member be brought into the community; indeed, he is "amazed" (*thaumazo*, 180c1) that Lysimachus summons Nicias and he as counsellors ahead of Socrates. The ensuing deliberation is one which none of its participants could have foreseen. The old men did not tell the generals why they invited them to view the display; now, Laches introduces a new element into the old men's well-laid plans. As for

Socrates, whatever has brought him to this gymnasium has happened to place him in the midst of the old men's appeal to the generals. Indeed, Plato arranges things such that the reader can only speculate regarding the particular circumstances which lead to Socrates' involvement in the deliberation. Is Socrates present at the display because he too wished to view it? Or has he simply happened to come to one of his many accustomed haunts on a day when a display happens to be taking place? Or has one of the generals invited Socrates along, perhaps having chanced to meet the philosopher *en route* to the display, and if so, did he mention to Socrates the reason for his attendance at the display? And how long has Socrates been present; has he heard (or overheard) what has been said thus far?[15]

Laches offers two reasons for his amazement: Socrates is of Lysimachus' deme, and he is always spending his time wherever there is any noble learnable or practise of the sort that Lysimachus and Melesias are seeking. Socrates appears to meet both of the qualifications--competence and trustworthiness--by which Lysimachus measures potential advisors. Lysimachus' response--"Has Socrates here indeed devoted care to such things?"(180c5-6)-shows that his interest is clearly aroused; he also appears surprised or taken aback by what Laches has said. Now, the cornerstone of the community which Lysimachus has just established is, in his eyes at least, the fact that its members all have sons. Yet Laches does not suggest that Socrates concerns himself with the education of sons for the sake of a son, and his substitution of a common deme for a common concern for one's son suggests that he is aware that Socrates as yet has no sons. Nor do the others see any need to ask whether some such reason is behind Socrates' activity.[16] Yet the very fact that Socrates shows so much concern for these things when he himself has no son to care for must surely strike his interlocuters as strange. None, however, is moved to remark upon Socrates' remarkable pastime.

Lysimachus is interested enough, however, to inquire as to whether Laches means that Socrates has "devoted care" to these matters (180c5f.). At this point Nicias interjects. He can confirm what Laches says: Socrates recently introduced a man to him as music-teacher for his son, a man to whom Nicias now gives high praise. Socrates seems to concern himself with the whole of education:[17] Laches has just said that Socrates is always spending his time in gymnasiums, i.e., wherever there is "<u>any</u> noble

learnable or practice of the sort that . . . [Lysimachus] is seeking for the youths" (180c1-3). Nicias now speaks of Socrates' introduction of a teacher of music; he twice mentions the manliness (*aner*; 180c9, d2) of this teacher, and claims that he is worthy to spend time with young men in whatever matters one might wish. Laches identifies himself with gymnastic, Nicias with music. Now, we may wonder why Nicias did not mention Socrates earlier, but again appears to be willing to speak only after Laches has introduced him. He surely had grounds for doing so, for Lysimachus asked the generals to advise not only about the martial art, but about any other learnable or practise of which they are aware as well. Nicias seems to be much more cautious than Laches, for he hastens to mention his familiarity with Socrates once Laches has done so.

Nicias' interjection must give further encouragement to Lysimachus. Laches spoke only of Socrates' public behavior, his concern with the education of sons; Nicias now indicates that Socrates has shown some care for another's son as well, with what Nicias regards as highly successful results. Lysimachus now turns to Socrates himself. He first sees fit to explain why the idea of approaching Socrates did not occur to him; people of his age, he tells Nicias, Laches, and Socrates, no longer know the younger men, since they spend so much of their time at home on account of their age. Lysimachus seems to mean that he is not familiar with Socrates' character and ways; he is now becoming acquainted with them through what the generals have said. But he has apparently just "become knowing" about Socrates in another respect as well, for he now addresses Socrates using the patronymic, although he has not been told that this Socrates is the son of Sophroniscus; he has also recognized "who Socrates is" (cf. 181c2-3).[19] What in the generals' comments has caused him this recognition? The surprise evident in his response to Laches suggests that it was what the latter had to say about Socrates. Lysimachus will in a moment "recall" that he has often heard the name Socrates mentioned at home; although he says that he has never asked if the boys were praising the son of Sophroniscus, he does not say that it did not occur to him that this might be that man's son. Lysimachus mentions this in attempting to induce Socrates to advise him concerning education; he is suggesting that Socrates will receive praise should he be willing to advise. Would Lysimachus mention the boys' praise and then turn to them with the question whether the man before them is the Socrates whom they praised so frequently without

being reasonably sure that this was indeed the same man? One thinks not. Now, there is good reason to suspect that Lysimachus' initial reaction to the boys' praise was very different than he now makes out. Consider. The boys have at home been wont to extoll a man whom, if he is the son of Sophroniscus, is the obscure son of an obscure father; could this strike Lysimachus as anything but an unhealthy influence, given his concerns? Indeed, might it not be the case that the boys' frequent praise of Socrates was the very thing which incited the old men to undertake the project in which they are now engaged? Might not such continuing praise of one whom Lysimachus must regard as a "nobody," if only because he does not seem to pass his time in the pursuit of "noble political deeds," have finally led the old men to the conviction that "something had to be done"? We might even suspect that Lysimachus and Melesias were at one time guilty of "letting their sons loose to do what they wished" (cf. 179a5-7), for the boys' frequent praise suggests that while the old men spend a good deal of time at home, the boys do not. And Lysimachus emphasized above that he and his friend have been given to admonishing the boys not to neglect themselves or disobey their fathers--perhaps by way of attempting to change their ways? Now, if Lysimachus has indeed suspected that the boys have been praising the son of his old comrade Sophroniscus, it is no wonder that he is so surprised at what Laches says; for the mention of the deme together with Socrates' habitual pastime brings him to the realization that the man who has just heard his initial words is the very man whom the boys have been spending so much time with, who is in a sense the cause of those words! And well might Lysimachus say that he does not "know" Socrates; the praise of both generals, which, as he will indicate in a moment, Lysimachus regards as authoritative, surely presents a stark contrast to what must have been Lysimachus' opinion of Socrates prior to this moment.

Based upon what he has heard, then, Lysimachus attempts to persuade Socrates to benefit him with whatever advice he may have to give. It is "necessary" for Socrates to advise a fellow-demesman if he can; but more than this, it is just for him to do so, for he also happens to be a paternal friend: his father and Lysimachus were comrades and the closest of friends. This is the first time that Lysimachus has mentioned justice; he mentions it in connection with the private things. For Lysimachus, justice appears to depend upon one's own; his horizon is formed by the complex of concerns arising from

his family and friends. We have already seen this reflected in what he had to say about his father: when he first mentioned that man's noble deeds, he spoke of "managing the affairs both of the allies and of this city" (179c4-5); when he turned to his father's blameworthiness, he spoke of "being busy with the affairs of <u>others</u>" (179d1-2). Lysimachus seems to view the political completely from the perspective of the private: possession of noble political deeds is worthy because it is the highest good for oneself. He says nothing that would indicate that his father's neglect might not have been due entirely to the pursuit of his own good, but due at least in part to a justice arising from the city.[19] Moreover, Lysimachus' attempt to induce the generals to give him the benefit of their knowledge did not include an appeal based on the justice of benefitting one's fellow-citizen. Instead, his attempt rested upon persuading them that it was in their own interest to enter into Lysimachus' community. And this appeal reflected the view of justice which he here manifests: the generals ought to be concerned about the education of their sons. Does not Lysimachus' attitude about this--as reflected in his statements that one ought to take care of sons as much as possible (179a5), that it is necessary not to neglect this (179b4-5), and perhaps most of all in his perceived need to provide the generals with the aitiology of his own resolve to do so (179b6ff.)--overlook the obvious? Men are surely motivated to care for their sons primarily by their love for them. Yet although Lysimachus does not entirely disregard this--he is surely now motivated at least in part by such love-his willingness to depend upon it has, it seems, been shaken. For he claims that his father's concern with the affairs of others, with what would bring him fame, was what led to the neglect of his son, Lysimachus. Hence, he speaks of caring for sons in the terms indicated above. But his appeal to the generals is grounded most fundamentally in that which he is sure that he can depend upon: personal self-interest. What is at stake for the generals is not only the fate of their sons, but their own fate as well: should they neglect this matter, their own names may suffer, because their sons may disgrace them, or at least blame them for such neglect.

Lysimachus' appeal to Socrates is along similar lines. A community founded on sons is replaced by a community founded on fathers: though Lysimachus is encouraged by the fact that they share a common deme, his hope that he may gain Socrates' advice and his efforts to do so rest upon the fact that he and Sophroniscus were friends. It is just

for Socrates to aid Lysimachus because the keeping up or preservation of a father's things, including his friendships, is owed to him by his son. But again, Lysimachus appeals beyond "one's own" to "oneself": he recalls that the boys often praise a Socrates, who has turned out to be this Socrates, and he then exclaims that it is well that Socrates exalts his father, both in other ways--i.e, the things for which the boys praise him--and especially since his own things will belong to Lysimachus' family, and theirs to him; actions which receive praise, something which, in Lysimachus' view, is worth receiving, exalt one's father as well, and conversely, those actions which exalt the father are themselves worthy of praise. Lysimachus' attempts to induce both the generals and Socrates to "speak simply" reflect the fact that men are not beings unto themselves, that they are incomplete, and that out of this there arises a complex of loves, desires, and obligations which arise with the greatest strength precisely towards those through whom one attempts to complete oneself. This is perhaps nowhere reflected more strongly than in Lysimachus' own case. Why is Lysimachus concerned to care for his son? Not simply for his own sake, but just as much for the sake of both his father and his son; and yet in a sense peculiarly for his own sake, for what he is cannot be separated from either father or son. Lysimachus blames his father for his own condition, yet he wishes nonetheless to restore his father's name. Hence, he wishes his son to become best, not only for his son's sake but his father's as well; his "looking ahead" is conditioned by his "looking behind." And his concern for his son reflects concern for himself as well: by attending to his son's education, he too will be doing what exalts the father, which is worthy of praise, and at the same time will not be open to blame such as he gives his father, even should his son somehow not become worthy of his name (179d4-5). Lysimachus' own situation and his attempts to persuade both the generals and Socrates, point to one dimension of the fact that one's good is a complex of personal good and the good of family and friends: how and why men are willing or moved to act for the good of another. And the emphasis which Lysimachus places upon these things, as exhibited by his mention of justice and his failure to mention the things of the city except from the perspective of individual good, point to a crucial question: how and why are men moved to act for that which is beyond the private, and especially for the good of the city?

Lysimachus' claim that Socrates has exalted his father prompts Laches to testify to such behavior by Socrates towards not only his father, but the fatherland as well. While his fellow-hoplites in the battle of Delium fled after the ranks were broken, Socrates retreated in a calm manner; if the others had been willing to act as Socrates acted, the Athenian defeat might not have occurred. This is obviously high praise in Laches' eyes; Lysimachus also treats it as such. For him it removes the last doubt concerning Socrates' suitability as an advisor, for it establishes that Socrates' advice will be knowledgeable; Socrates is capable of advising because he is capable of performing noble deeds. That Laches speaks only of a single such deed on Socrates' part, and moreover a deed performed in retreat, does not matter; this testimony comes from a man who is in Lysimachus' eyes indisputably capable of judging these matters. Upon hearing these things, Lysimachus says, he rejoices that Socrates enjoys a good reputation; Socrates has "made a name" for himself entirely in speech, and this is all the more remarkable given the "name" which he previously made for himself through the boys' speech. Lysimachus is now truly well-disposed to Socrates, and to the re-establishment of their friendship. Now that they have recognized each other, he proposes that he, Socrates, Melesias, and the sons become acquainted by being with each other. And might not such friendship provide the basis for trust with which Lysimachus is so concerned? However, Lysimachus remains uncertain about the status of family and friendship: Socrates is again reminded by Lysimachus that it is just that he regard Lysimachus as his own, and he now includes Melesias and his son within the purview of the justice arising from the paternal friendship. Yet if Socrates is to be induced to benefit another by the justice of which Lysimachus speaks, it would not seem to oblige him to advise a man to whom, on Lysimachus' terms, Socrates himself has no ties. Lysimachus either does not notice this, or he chooses to ignore it; he is, after all, obligated to obtain advice for Melesias as well as himself.

Lysimachus concludes by turning again to the matter at hand: what does Socrates say about the subject they began with? Is the fighting in armour suitable for lads, or not? Lysimachus appears to defer to the claim made by his authorities, and particularly by Laches, that Socrates is more qualified than they to advise about such matters. Socrates, however, does not. In his first speech in the dialogue, Socrates indicates that he will try to advise Lysimachus, and to do the other things which Lysimachus has proposed, if he is

able to. However, he too does not immediately give counsel; instead, he in turn defers to the generals. It seems to him "most just" that he should first hear what they say and learn from them, since he is both younger than they are and less experienced in these matters. Socrates speaks of a justice quite different than the one to which Lysimachus referred, a justice which depends upon knowledge, and the dictates of this justice appear to override those invoked by Lysimachus. But is this justice responsible for Socrates' willingness to participate in the deliberation? It may give him a claim to advise--albeit only, according to him, after the generals have done so; does it require that he advise as well? It does not seem to, for while he does not deny that he is competent to advise about "these matters," he says that he will try to advise "if he is able;" something other than his own incompetence may make it impossible for him to advise. Moreover, Socrates will later deny that he is knowing about matters of education; yet he does not do so here. The grounds of Socrates' participation in the deliberation are not clear; for some reason, he seems willing to take part, or at least is unwilling for now to deny that he is able to take part. His participation at this point takes the form of subtly arranging the manner in which the deliberation will proceed. The generals will speak first, followed--perhaps--by Socrates. Moreover, they will not advise by simply asserting that the learnable should or should not be learned, or by engaging in a discussion with each other or with their interlocuters, but by giving speeches: Socrates will <u>first</u> hear what they say, and learn from them; he could not learn anything from a simple "yea" or "nay." And the question with which he ends his comments--"So, Nicias, why doesn't either one of you speak?"--prompts Nicias to speak first; by asking Laches the same question, he could have prompted him to speak first instead.

Socrates defers to the generals on the basis of age and experience. He thus suggests two possible grounds for a claim to know, and since he says that he may "teach and persuade" after hearing the generals, he implies both that there is at least one other possibility and that the two which he has named may be defective.[20]But why does Socrates mention two criteria? He speaks of the generals' experience in "these matters"-"these matters" presumably being matters of war; regarding what, then, does age furnish a claim to know? Experience in matters of war presumably incorporates age to some extent; Socrates' mention of age in addition to experience seems superflous if he is speaking only

of the generals' competence regarding these matters. Now, Lysimachus seemed to imply that the generals are to judge the technical merits of the fighting art; the basis of this judging is presumably their experience with such things. But Lysimachus said nothing concerning how this art, if technically sound, would contribute to a son's becoming best. By speaking of both age and experience, Socrates points to Lysimachus' failure to do so; he also implies that military experience constitutes an insufficient basis for judging this question. In mentioning age, does he mean to suggest that it is or must be the basis upon which the generals will give counsel regarding this matter? If so, it cannot be on the basis of age alone; Lysimachus and Melesias too are old, indeed are the elders in this community, and they have denied that they are knowing because they possess no noble deeds. Perhaps by mentioning age, Socrates is hinting that something in addition to the possession of noble deeds is necessary if one is to give competent advice about these things; after all, one would not approach a young man such as Alcibaides for such advice. Yet if age is this additional something, it is not the only possibility, for Socrates says that he may give counsel, and if he does so, we would expect him to address something other than the learnable's effectiveness in combat; he is presumably not competent to make judgements about this matter.[21] If these concerns are behind Socrates' speech, however, he chooses for some reason not to make them explicit; at this point he raises no questions either about the learnable's relation to becoming best or about the generals' competence to advise about this.

181e-184c: The Generals' Speeches of Advice

Nicias complies with Socrates' request; "nothing prevents" his speaking. He proceeds to give an ordered, eloquent speech about the learnable. The speech is "theoretical" in character: Nicias makes no references to particulars, and does not elaborate on the points which he cites in favour of the learnable; it is hard to say, judging from his speech, whether his evaluation is based in his experience at all. In his opinion, the learnable is in many ways useful for youths to know. He begins by saying that by occupying their time in learning the art, the young will stay out of trouble; the learnable will first of all prevent or at least hinder them from becoming any worse. The first substantive benefit which Nicias mentions is the following: by spending their time in the

practise of this gymnastic, the young will necessarily be in better bodily condition, and at the same time will be exercised in a gymnastic which, with horsemanship, most befits a free man. For only they will be exercised in the implements of war, the contest in which free men are competitors. This gymnastic is superior to others, however, because it enables the free man to more effectively defend his freedom, i.e., the freedom of his city. This is the closest that Nicias comes to mentioning the city or public things in the dialogue, and even here we see his concentration on the private or individual: he speaks of war, which would seem first and foremost to be a contest between cities, as simply a contest between free men.[22]

Nicias speaks next of the learnable's benefits in battle itself: it will impart skill in fighting. Here again Nicias emphasizes the individual: the learnable will be of "some help . . . when one must fight in the ranks with many others"; its greatest help, however, is when the ranks are broken. Yet in hoplite warfare a city's victory or defeat depended primarily on whether its ranks remained intact (cf. 191b8-c6). This is not to say that a city would not benefit were such a learnable to improve the ability of its hoplites to fight on their own; Laches' mention of Socrates' behavior at Delium points to the value of such ability. But Nicias makes no mention of anything along these lines; his focus is on the individual, and moreover, on the individual who finds himself in the situation where he is presented with the greatest danger, where he is on his own. And from the point of view of Nicias' city, such situations may well be ones in which the battle has gone wrong, in which <u>its</u> ranks have been broken. Now, it is unclear from what Nicias says here whether the learnable's greatest benefit in such situations lies in the security which it affords to one who finds himself in the most dangerous of circumstances, or in the ability which it provides to exploit the unparalleled opportunities for glory which are presented by those circumstances. Nicias speaks in such a way as to suggest both: on the one hand, he speaks of not only defending oneself in flight but also pursuing to attack as necessities, and he claims that the learnable will enable one to avoid suffering (*patho*, 182b3) anything in both cases; on the other hand, he follows these statements by saying that one who possesses the learnable will be able to do more than avoid harm or defend oneself, that one will be able to gain the advantage, i.e., victories, in any situation. Or does what Nicias says not rather reveal that he regards this *techne* as worth learning precisely because it

does both? The learnable brings both security and victories; it does not require that a man sacrifice one for the other. Nicias' comments here reveal a concern which is evident throughout his advice about the learnable, a concern for a combination of security and nobility.

Nicias speaks next of an indirect benefit of the learnable: it incites a desire for other noble studies. What he says in this regard suggests that there is a hierarchy of the noble, a hierarchy which is ordered by honor. "Everyone" who has learned tactics will be moved to pursue the general's art by love of honor--i.e., by the prospect of attaining greater or finer honor; one who has learned fighting in armour will presumably be moved to learn tactics for the same reason. Again we see Nicias' emphasis of the individual: the learnable is not only useful in those circumstances of battle which pose the greatest dangers and opportunities to the individual, but also leads to a desire for that *techne* which, according to him, brings the greatest individual honor. What Nicias says about generalship has the effect of downplaying the noblest aspect of physical combat--fighting on one's own when the ranks are broken--because it elevates generalship in relation to such combat. And presumably, the *techne* of fighting in armour also provides the general with the security necessary to pursuing the honor which comes from generalship.[23]

Nicias next returns to matters of physical combat and makes "no small addition" to his list of the learnable's benefits.[24]The learnable will make "every man (*aner*, 182c6) in war not a little more confident and more courageous than himself. This is the first mention of courage in the dialogue: courage first comes to light in the company of confidence and learning. And from what Nicias says, courage seems to be confidence, or a well-founded confidence: Nicias appears to mean that the ability to "gain the advantage everywhere" which this skill imparts also engenders a well-founded confidence, and hence a willingness to engage in combat. By making this "addition" to the learnable's benefits, he implies that something in addition to the training of the body is necessary to success in combat; at the same time, he connects this additional element to the technical knowledge which he claims is necessary to such success. Nicias speaks of a courage which is produced or enhanced through artifice, through a *techne* which instills courage not so much by training the soul to face the risks of combat as by engendering an awareness that one possesses a skill which reduces such risks. Nicias' brief mention of courage, then, agains reflects the same

combination of security and nobility, for a willingness to engage in combat, upon which the attainment of honor in the first instance depends, seems, from what he says, to arise from or be increased by an awareness of one's ability to avoid harm in such engagements.[25]

Having spoken of courage, of what someone recently defined as "grace under pressure," Nicias turns to the learnable's effect on the body's grace. In these his final comments about the learnable, he makes his concern with the duality "security and nobility" explicit. The learnable will make a man "appear more graceful where he must appear more graceful, and where at the same time he will appear more dreadful to the enemies through his gracefulness." Some may consider this a "small thing," Nicias says, but it should not be considered dishonorable; for Nicias, appearance is no small consideration. On the contrary, from what he says, it appears to be at least as important to gaining honor as technical skill in combat: a man must appear graceful on the battlefield; merely gaining victories is apparently not sufficient. And at the same time, this gracefulness increases one's security, by making one appear more dreadful to one's enemies.[26] Indeed, in regards to security, this effect of the learnable may in Nicias' eyes be of greater benefit than, and certainly complements, the technical ability which it imparts, insofar as the latter presumes actual engagements with the enemy, while the former tends, through the fear which it inspires, to reduce such engagements. Gracefulness makes one appear noble to one's friends or comrades, and formidable to one's enemies; it seems to be the perfect combination of nobility and security.

Nicias, then, stresses the individual, technical artifice, and a nobility that does not sacrifice security in his advice. He concludes his sophisticated speech on an urbane note: if Laches has something to say besides what he has said, he will hear it with pleasure. Laches does indeed have something to say, and he says it in not nearly so urbane a manner; his speech is nothing less than a direct, frontal attack against what Nicias has just said. His speech differs from Nicias' not only in substance, but in form as well; one is tempted to regard it as a different kind of speech. Nicias made no reference to his own experience, or to particulars; his speech was abstract and "theoretical" in character. In contrast, Laches makes reference to "the authorities," to the Lacedaemonians, whom, because of their long experience with the things of war, he regards as experts, and to whom he defers by giving them pride of place in his speech; to reputation; and to personal

experience. His speech is eminently "practical" in character. And Laches seems as much concerned to take issue with Nicias and what his speech represents, as to evaluate the learnable; he begins his speech by addressing not Lysimachus, but Nicias.

Laches begins by saying that it seems good to know all things. Perhaps this is a gibe at Nicias; at any rate, it is not Laches' opinion, for he thinks that it is not worth learning what is not serious (182e4, 184b3). By a serious learnable, Laches seems to mean one that is useful for doing or attaining serious things, e.g., victory in war (cf. 182e5-6 with 184a10ff.). Laches' judgement of the "business of armour" is that it is either not a serious learnable, or that it is not a learnable at all, but a sham or deception; in either case, it is not worth attempting to learn. Laches does not say which category he thinks the learnable falls in, although he gives us some reason to think that his final opinion is that it is a sham. It appears that he is not very concerned with the answer to this question; in practical terms, the question is not important or relevant. He has seen enough to know that it is one of these two things, and that is sufficient for rejecting it.

Laches turns first to the attitude of the Lacedaemonians towards the learnable: if there were something to this, they would surely have noticed it because of what they care for. The Lacedaemonians, then, are the experts in this matter; their judgement should be considered trustworthy. Whereas Nicias considered the learnable entirely from the perspective of the individual, Laches appears to be judging it in light of its usefulness to the city, and more precisely, to a particular kind of city, a city that favors warlike deeds and what is useful to victory in war, rather than one that favors beautiful speeches about warlike deeds (183a3-7). And Laches begins to evince a preference for the Spartans here as well. Sparta is the city that takes the "serious things" most seriously. Laches will later make this preference even more explicit, when he claims that the sole Greek *harmonia* is the Dorian (188d6-8): the Spartans are the most Greek of the Greeks; their city is the true city. We have already seen Laches' approval of wholehearted devotion to the city and its activities, and to the fatherland (180b, 181af.).[27] It seems that for Laches, there is in a sense no separation of regime and fatherland in the true city; since the best way of life is one devoted to the fatherland, the best regime is one which promotes this way of life, which is "informed" by the fatherland. Sparta, then, is in Laches' view the best or true city because it promotes such devotion to the highest degree. And in turn, Laches appears to

manifest the view that individual virtue is entirely subordinate to the requirements of the city, that individual virtue cannot be judged apart from the political whole (cf. 197d6-8). Hence, while Nicias' speech suggested that what is useful or best from the city's point of view may not always be best from the individual's point of view, Laches does not seem to separate the two. He begins by speaking of the learnable's utility--or lack thereof--to "the Lacedaemonians, to the city in which nothing else is a care but to seek whatever will conduce to advantage over others in war, and he then turns to an evaluation of the learnable's worth from the perspective of the individual practitioner; nothing in what he says suggests that city and man may not always be in harmony.

The "authorities," then, judge against this learnable. Laches next invokes reputation against it. He speaks first of the evidence of his own eyes: he has observed "no small number" of these men in battle, and he has seen "of what sort" they are. However, instead of elaborating upon this, Laches turns to the evidence of many eyes: in all other matters, those who gain renown come from those who have practised each thing, but none of the practitioners of this learnable have ever become of good reputation in war. Lysimachus and Melesias need not rely upon the evidence of their presumed expert Laches alone; reputation is, regarding this as all other matters, a reliable basis for judgement. Indeed, in a sense it appears to be more reliable, for Laches is here disagreeing with the old men's other authority, Nicias; the judgements of the majority of men support his judgement, and contradict that of Nicias. What Laches has heard (or more precisely, what he hasn't heard), then, supports what he has seen. We may wonder, however, what Laches would have done had the evidence of his eyes and ears conflicted, not to say the evidence of his eyes and his view of the Spartan attitude.[28]

Finally, Laches cites the evidence of his own eyes; his personal experience confirms what others--both expert and non-expert alike--have found concerning this learnable. Yet Laches has seen the deeds of a number of these practitioners; why does he single out Stesilaus, and moreover, only part of what he observed of Stesilaus? First of all, undoubtably, because this is the very man whom the deliberators have just witnessed, and heard saying "great things" about himself. The worth of Stesilaus' learnable should not be judged by his speeches about it, nor by his display, his "drama," but by his deeds. It is deeds or practise which should be the test of this learnable, because deeds--what Laches

and others have observed--are self-evident; they do not lie or deceive. But of equal importance, Laches relates this experience because it "stands out;" it most embodies what Laches wishes to point out to the old men--and to Nicias. In regards to the practitioners which he observed, Laches said only that he saw "of what sort they are," and he supported his observations by arguing that none of these men have become of good reputation in war; presumably, what Laches saw indicated that this art is technically unsound, and hence that one who attempted to practise it could never hope to win fame in war. Stesilaus' mishap shows that this art in not merely useless, but positively harmful to its practitioner. Stesilaus fought with an unusual weapon, "a weapon as distinguished as he himself is distinguished from others," which "somehow" became entangled in the rigging of the ship on which he was serving, and as a result gained him a good deal of ridicule. "This, Nicias," Laches in effect insinuates, "is the sort of 'grace' that one gains from such a learnable."[29] The point of the story, then, is not simply to demonstrate that Stesilaus' innovative art is technically unsound, but as much or more to indicate to the old men the likely consequences of adopting the art, which Laches does in great detail, to the point of mentioning Stesilaus' reaction to being pelted by a stone.[30]

Having assessed the worth of the learnable as a fighting skill--and, by implication, Nicias' judgement on this question as well--Laches concludes his speech by turning to the other matter which Nicias addressed, the learnable's effect regarding courage.[31] He begins by speaking not of courage, but of cowardice. This is the first mention of cowardice in the dialogue; Nicias spoke only of courage and confidence. In Laches' view, if a coward thought that he knew this learnable, he would simply become bolder, and would end up revealing more clearly what he was, presumably because the learnable would fail him "in the clutch," thus leading him to flee. Now, Nicias claimed that the learnable would make one more courageous by increasing one's confidence: if he does not think that courage simply results from knowledge, he certainly thinks that a man's courage can be artificially enhanced. Laches claims that this learnable, because it is not technically sound, would make the coward not more confident, but bolder. Would he then agree that genuine, as opposed to sham knowledge, of this sort would add to a man's courage, or make the coward courageous? One suspects that he would not; by contrasting the emboldened coward with the courageous man who attempts to employ this learnable,

Laches implies that courage and cowardice are prior to any kind of knowing, are a matter of character. The coward, in making use of this sham learnable, attempts to substitute artifice for something which the courageous man possesses, and which he lacks, by nature (cf. 192c1). What results in the case of the coward is surely just in Laches' eyes (cf. 189b4-6): by learning it, he says, the coward would simply be "more clearly revealed" for what he is. For the courageous man, however, the result is quite the contrary. The pretense to such knowledge, according to Laches, arouses envy; consequently, no courageous man who claims to possess it will escape becoming ridiculous. If he makes even the smallest of mistakes, he will be slandered and ridiculed; and even if he manages to avoid such errors, he will still harm his own name, for the mere claim will provide people with the opportunity to attribute even his courage to this knowledge. Only a man who possesses "wonderful virtue," who possesses something greater than courage, could escape this fate, presumably because such virtue is so outstanding that it simply precludes ridicule, and this virtue must by its very distinguished nature be rare; the courage of most men, the courage which most men are capable of possessing, cannot be counted upon to save one from such a fate.

This learnable, then, not only will not help a man to gain a good reputation; it will not simply make a man look ridiculous; it will bring slander and ridicule even to the courageous man, to the man who <u>deserves</u> a good reputation. Therefore, Laches implies, one must attend not only to what will lead to a good reputation, but also and equally to what will harm one's good reputation, to what will arouse people's ever-present envy. Now, what Laches emphasizes here may well cause us to wonder whether such envy is reflected in the judgements which he made based upon reputation and his own experience. Concerning the former, Laches implied that war is no different than other things in regards to reputation; he has surely now given us some reason to think that war constitutes a special case. And while we need not (and, I think, should not) regard Laches' recounting of his own observations as reflecting envy on his part, he seems, judging from his story, to have observed not only Stesilaus' deed, but a response to it by other men which may well have arisen from their envy. Indeed, Laches appears to have judged Stesilaus' novel weapon as much on the basis of the ridicule with which it was greeted by friend and foe alike, as on the basis of his own observation of Stesilaus' use of the

weapon. Perhaps in both cases, then, the judgements of other men, upon which Laches' own judgements were based at least in part, reflected the very envy which Laches says the pretense to this sort of knowledge evokes. But this may in a sense serve only to further underscore Laches' point: this sort of thing leaves a man vulnerable to the slander and ridicule of envious human beings. What Laches is concerned to emphasize to the old men is precisely this: a man who wishes to win a name for himself, and to maintain his good name, must be cognizant of the dangers posed by this all-too-human envy.[32] And in emphasizing this, Laches seems to indicate that it is no small concern for him as well.

Laches concludes his advice by exhorting Lysimachus not to let Socrates go, but to solicit his opinion. This is the second time that Laches has urged Lysimachus not to let Socrates go; Laches himself refers to the first use by speaking of what he said at the beginning. There he recommended Socrates on the basis of behavior which he observed Socrates displaying in battle, and moreover, observed while retreating and "sharing the danger" with Socrates (189b5-8; cf. *Symp.* 221a1-5, b7-8 and context). Laches, in his own eyes at least, displayed the same deeds at Delium; does he again urge Lysimachus to gain Socrates' opinion not so much because he thinks that Socrates may have additional advice to give as because he thinks that Socrates will agree with Laches rather than with Nicias, that because the two men displayed the same deeds, they will also give the same speeches? Laches' entire speech has been a response to that of Nicias; he seems to conclude his speech with a proposal aimed at defeating the speech of his counterpart, a defeat which would be based in majority.

184c-189b: Reconstitution of the Deliberative Community

At any rate, Lysimachus takes Laches' advice and turns to Socrates for the deciding vote. If the generals had agreed, he says, there would be less need of such a one; he does not say that there would be no need of such a tie-breaker. Perhaps the disagreement which Lysimachus has just seen (*horao*, 184d2) has caused some doubt in his mind as to whether the generals really do know. Socrates expresses surprise that Lysimachus is going to rely on the praise of the greater number, and he proceeds to separate knowledge and majority: noble judgements are made by the former, not the latter. The generals' disagreement may have caused Lysimachus some doubt, but he can

see no other course than to register the vote of his third advisor, and this does not seem unreasonable: the advisors have votes, i.e., they are presumed equal, because they are all presumed to know. Socrates, however, chooses to interpret the disagreement as indicative of incompetence on the part of at least one of the generals; yet it is not clear that one should expect any council of "experts" to manifest unanimity at all times. Furthermore, Socrates proposes that they examine which of the advisors is knowing, without saying what they will do should all of of the advisors turn out to have claims to expertise. Socrates' actions here make more sense when we realize that his criticism of obeying the greater number is implicitly a criticism of the basis upon which the old men have looked to the generals as experts,[33] for reputation depends at least in part upon the praise of the greater number.

However, Socrates does not attempt to elicit an alternative to what Lysimachus has proposed through continued discussion with Lysimachus; instead, he turns to Melesias. This is the first and only time that Melesias actively participates in the discussion. Why does Socrates draw him in only at this point? One reason may be found by considering the subject that Socrates discusses with Melesias: whom should the non-knower obey? Lysimachus initiated the discussion with what he labelled a preface (179c1),which outlined the reasons why he and his friend had approached the generals for advice. In turn, we may surmise, Lysimachus' preface, and indeed the deliberation itself, was prefaced by a deliberation and agreement between Lysimachus and Melesias concerning the very subject which Socrates now discusses with Melesias, viz., whom to approach for advice. As well, the old men likely had an agreement--perhaps explicit, but more likely implicit--concerning who would conduct the deliberation. Lysimachus has done all of the speaking to this point; he seems to be the more dominant of the old men; his direction of the deliberation is presumably in accord with the way the old men act in each other's company. But Lysimachus has now failed to gain what he and his friend wanted from the deliberation; the generals have disagreed. Now, in a new preface, Socrates turns to Melesias in order to gain an agreement with him which parallels--and dissolves--that which exists between the old men. The old men's agreement about whom to approach for advice is replaced by an agreement between Socrates and Melesias that it is necessary first to examine who is expert. And through this new agreement, Socrates replaces

Lysimachus in deed, though not yet in speech, as the leader of the deliberation. Thus far, Lysimachus has directed the course which the deliberation has followed--with one exception: Socrates' first words in the dialogue, in which he deferred to the generals. We now have some reason to suspect that this deference was intended to promote the disagreement between them. He did not then raise the question which he now raises--whether the advisors are knowing--but instead steered the deliberation in a direction that might indicate "in deed" to the old men that there was reason to doubt or to examine the competence of their advisors.[34] Doubts about the generals' expertise would be most effectively raised if they disagreed, for if they disagreed, the grounds upon which, according to Socrates, their knowing is based would be suspect, even regarding that subject, i.e., combat, about which they would seem most likely to know. To facilitate such disagreement, Socrates arranged things such that, first, the generals would each speak at length, and second, Nicias would speak before Laches, Laches being more likely to disagree with Nicias than vice versa. Socrates' participation in the discussion has thus turned upon chance in two respects: first, the chain of circumstances behind his introduction by Laches, and second, the possibility that the generals would disagree, a possibility which was enhanced but of course could not be ensured by Socrates' forethoughtful arrangements. Presumably, if the generals had agreed, it would have been difficult for Socrates to raise the question whether the advisors are knowing; this being the case, we may assume that if they had agreed, Socrates would have been "unable to advise" (cf. 181d2), or more precisely, to "teach and persuade." But they have now disagreed; and their disagreement provides the opening through which Socrates enters the deliberation. With the disagreement between Lysimachus and Melesias, he takes over the direction of it. The argument which Socrates addresses to Melesias may well have persuaded Lysimachus, had it been addressed to him; but if Socrates had reached this agreement with Lysimachus, Lysimachus would have retained the responsibility for directing the discussion. By turning to Melesias, Socrates is able to "seize the initiative." From this point on, it is Socrates alone who guides the discussion; with the exception of the dialogue's conclusion, Lysimachus will speak (again, speaking for both himself and Melesias) only to ratify what Socrates proposes and to hand the deliberation over to Socrates, i.e., to complete in speech what Socrates has already effected in deed.

Socrates does not obtain this new agreement without some hesitation on Melesias' part; he is, it seems, somewhat reluctant to disagree with his friend, to break with their habitual manner of dealing with each other.[35] Socrates overcomes Melesias' reluctance first by using an example which plays upon the concerns of Melesias and his friend--the fighting in armour, like athletics, aims at victory, and the kinds of deeds which Lysimachus and Melesias want for their sons surely include victories--and second, by speaking of those concerns, and the great risks which turn upon the correct choice of expert. If it has not been made clear already, Socrates here leaves no doubt about what is motivating the old men: their sons are to become best for the sake of and in light of their father's house or the family name. The old men's concern here comes to light as completely private, as an aspect--perhaps the most important aspect--of household management; care for one's own as the education of sons cannot be separated from care for one's own as the preservation of the "whole house of the father".

Socrates gains Melesias' agreement, in contradistinction to what Lysimachus has just proposed, that fine judgements are those made by knowledge, but not by majority. He seems to treat knowledge and majority as mutually exclusive, and thereby undermines the basis upon which the old men have hitherto judged knowledge: reputation. Once Socrates has gained Melesias' assent to this, he persuades him that what follows is that they must examine for expertise; does it not also follow from what Socrates has just asserted that judgements about expertise must be based in knowledge? The old men--the non-knowers--then, will have become knowing themselves, or find an expert in the judging of experts (which of course seems to result in a *reductio ad infinitum*); there seems to be no other alternative. Yet when we notice that Socrates, in speaking of who Melesias ought to obey, pointed to the man educated and trained by a <u>good</u> trainer, and further, that he gains Melesias' agreement by speaking of a certain kind of knowledge, i.e, of *techne*, one has reason to question Socrates' claim. For the technical expert is judged largely, if not solely, by his reputation, and it seems that the judgements which give rise to this reputation do reflect a certain kind of knowing. Indeed, the confidence which most people feel about the *technai* is due at least in part to their ability to judge the technical expert, to "see" that he is competent because they themselves are able to evaluate with sufficient accuracy the results of his knowledge (cf. 185e9ff.). Concerning this kind of

knowing, which Socrates has himself introduced, knowledge and majority do not seem to be as completely distinct as he claims. Indeed, with certain *technai*, the reliance of the non-knower on reputation is especially important: in the case of the doctor, for example, one can to a large extent judge of the expert's work only through the speeches of others who have been successfully (or unsuccessfully) treated by him. And when we notice an example such as the doctor, we realize that reputation provides a way in which to judge not only the expert's competence, but his trustworthiness as well. Now, at the beginning of the dialogue, Lysimachus said that he and Melesias had approached the generals for two reasons: competence and frankness. Socrates here says nothing about the latter; yet even if some means other than reputation is needed to evaluate the expert's competence, will this provide some basis upon which to trust the expert who proves to be competent? Socrates seems to introduce *techne*, and to speak as if what they are looking for is a technical expert, and simultaneously to undermine the grounds upon which the technical expert is usually judged--and trusted. Why he introduces *techne*, and the extent to which what they are concerned with constitutes a *techne*, at this point remains unclear.

Having persuaded Melesias that it is necessary to examine for expertise, that forethought concerning the "house of the father" calls for this, Socrates turns to such an examination. He asks, using the example of athletic competition which he has just introduced, how they would examine in order to determine which of the interlocuters is most expert: "Would it not be he who had learned and practised it, and had had good teachers of this very thing"? When we compare this formulation to what Socrates said concerning whom one ought to obey regarding athletic competition, we notice that only here is learning mentioned; in regards to obeying another--which may or may not be based on examination of the kind which Socrates has proposed--he spoke only of teachers. The possession of good teachers is not sufficient ground for such obedience; the one who is to be obeyed must have learned as well. Socrates here raises the question of the prospective practitioner's ability to learn, a question which has not and will not be discussed in regard to the sons. Hence, Socrates subtly calls into question the old men's belief that finding adequate teachers will ensure their sons' success, their claim that their own lack of success is simply due to a lack of teaching, and indeed, their very deliberation. Consideration of a son's nature would seem to be necessary prior to a

deliberation aimed at determining what they should be taught in order to become best--however reluctant fathers might be to examine such things. And Socrates here raises questions about another aspect of nature as well. Lysimachus and Melesias approached the generals on the basis of their reputation for deeds, as practitioners. Socrates points to this by asking who is most expert (185b2); in the same breath, he mentions two possibilities--the athlete, and the trainer.[36] Is the athlete, the man expert in using his own body, or the trainer, the man expert in preparing many bodies, more capable of judging how another should train for a competition? The answer seems obvious. But there is a further issue, and one which makes Socrates' choice of examples seem peculiarly appropriate. The old men want their sons to become best, and hence have turned to men who, they believe, have already become best in practice. In the case of athletic competition, the best practitioner and the best teacher are not necessarily, and perhaps only rarely, the same man. Athletics seems to be the most visible of cases where a *techne* cannot substitute for nature, where the requirement of "expertise" is natural ability: the outstanding practitioner, as we say, has a gift. On the other hand, the trainer need not be an outstanding practitioner in order to be an outstanding teacher, although it is probably necessary that he is or was at one time capable of practising the competition which he teaches. Who, then, is most expert about such competitions: the one "most expert" in deed, or the one "most expert" in speech? And is the same division found regarding the sort of excellence which Lysimachus and Melesias seek for their sons?

Having persuaded Melesias that they must examine the advisors for expertise, and through that discussion, having reordered the leadership of the deliberative community, Socrates returns to its business. However, instead of continuing the discussion of how one would examine for expertise, he rather abruptly raises another question: what is the thing for the sake of which they are seeking teachers (185b6f.)? Socrates' first action as leader of the deliberation is thus to raise what is truly the first question for any deliberation: what is the end about which deliberation is to take place? If this is not clear, deliberation is difficult, not to say impossible. Socrates' question evokes a bewildered response from Melesias. For him there is no doubt as to the end: he and Lysimachus want their sons to become best. But as we saw in our consideration of Lysimachus' opening speech, the learnable's contribution to this end could be conceived in a number of ways,

which varied according to how "becoming best" was substantively conceived. Nicias is also uncertain as to what Socrates means; are they not, he says, examining whether or not the young men should learn fighting in armour? Socrates agrees that they are, but employs two examples to show Nicias what he is pointing to: this learnable is being considered for the sake of some "thing," and what that "thing" is has not been made clear. Socrates gains Nicias' agreement--and no one else objects--that the thing with which they are concerned is the soul, specifically the soul of the young men. That the old men had the soul in mind at the beginning of the deliberation is questionable, to say the least; Lysimachus appeared to be asking the generals to evaluate the learnable as a technical skill, a skill for the sake of the body. And both Nicias and Laches addressed this question: Nicias claimed that Stesilaus' art would impart fighting ability, indeed outstanding fighting ability, Laches that it would not. But both generals discussed the learnable's effect on the soul, and they agreed that a certain state of soul, which each called courage, is necessary to the use of the body in combat; what each said about courage, however, intimated that they disagree about its nature as well. Socrates, then, turns to the soul because what has been said thus far points to it. But given the character of the disagreement between the generals, is it possible for them to have deliberation in common? Socrates ensures that they will be able to, or rather that their disagreement will not break up Lysimachus' community, by speaking of "the thing" for the sake of which they are deliberating without saying anything substantive about that "thing;" by doing so, he is able, at least for the present, to preserve the deliberation.

We may ask, however, whether Socrates' abstraction is conducive to effective deliberation from the point of view of the old men, the "non-knowers." Socrates has just said that they have been attempting to deliberate without being clear about the end of the deliberation; once he gains agreement that the end is "the soul," he proceeds as if their lack of clarity has been dispelled. But has it? The very examples which Socrates uses to gain this agreement suggest several ways in which it has not. In both examples, he also speaks of "the thing itself": the eye, and the horse. But deliberation about a drug for the eye is not concerned simply with the eye, but with the specific power of the eye, its sight. Deliberation about, say, a cosmetic for the eye would not be concerned with its sight but with its appearance. In his speech, Nicias spoke both of a power of the body and of the

body's appearance; both, he maintained contribute to a man's success. Now, the expert concerned with drugs for the eye is the doctor. Socrates has, just moments ago, mentioned the gymnastic art as well; there are two arts concerned with the body. Whereas medicine is primarily concerned with restoring the body's health, gymnastic aims at maintaining and improving it; and gymnastic concerns itself with the form or beauty of the body as well. Furthermore, medicine promotes an excellence or condition of which many bodies can partake; gymnastic, while being a *techne* and hence also applicable to many bodies, also promotes an excellence that is attainable by relatively few men--excellence in athletic competition.[37] This difference between gymnastic and medicine reflects one aspect of the difference which emerged between Nicias and Laches; the latter spoke of an excellence which appeared to be much more common than that which the former mentioned. Is the art which attends to souls concerned to promote an excellence attainable by many or few souls? Or does this art somehow incorporate ends analogous to those of both gymnastic and medicine?

The example of the eye raises questions about another aspect of the *techne* of attending to souls as well. Socrates speaks not simply of the body, but of a part of the body. One need only consider medical specialization today to see that the attendance of the body is highly divisible, that a part of the body can be attended to with little regard for the rest of the body. Moreover, medical experts specialize not only in parts but also in types of bodies: witness gynecology, pediatrics, geriatrics. How is it with the attendance of the soul? Are the participants looking for one expert in the attendance of the whole soul, or a number of experts, each competent in attending to a part of the soul?[38] Lysimachus himself introduced this question when he spoke in such a way as to suggest that education has parts (180a); do these parts correspond to parts of the soul, or to divisions arising from the complex of body and soul? And is there one expert in the attendance of all types of souls (including those of young men), or many, each attending to a specific type? Additional questions are raised by the example of the horse. Socrates asserts that when someone examines whether or not, and when, a bridle should be put on a horse, he is "presumably" deliberating for the sake of the horse, and Nicias agrees. Would it not be more accurate to say that the deliberation is really for the sake of the rider, or about the horse as a means to the rider's ends, the use that he wishes to make of

the horse? Now, the horse is a standard Platonic metaphor for the city;[39] and are these men not now engaged in deliberating about the future leaders of the city, or in terms of the metaphor, about the riders of horses? Lysimachus, as we have noted, seems to be concerned exclusively with the good of the rider, with his use of the city to attain "noble deeds in war and peace." And Socrates has just gained Melesias' agreement that the whole house of the father will be governed in a manner corresponding to whether the sons become good or the opposite.[40] Now, it may be the case that the good of horse and rider harmonize, that the good of the horse, the end to which it is naturally suited, is its use by the rider, and in turn, that the good of the rider--the ends for which he uses the horse--is best promoted by attending to the horse's health, proper bridling, etc. But is the case of city and ruler analogous in this regard? Is the city's good defined in terms of its usefulness to promoting the ends of the ruler? On the contrary, the city defines the ruler's good in light of what is good for the city. What then is the true relation between the good of the ruler and the good of the city he rules? The ruler does not seem to necessarily promote the city's good by pursuing his own; since these things do not automatically harmonize, what are the implications for the *techne* of attending to souls? How does it reconcile the tension between the good of the ruler and the good of the city?

Perhaps such questions can be left to the expert; after all, Socrates has claimed that they need to examine for expertise, not the subject of the expertise itself. But in the first place, one needs some substantive notion of what it is that one is after before one can begin to look for the expert concerned with that thing: for example, we all have some notion of what health is, and that a part of us can be unhealthy; to take the case which Socrates mentioned, when our eyesight begins to deteriorate, we "know" that we should seek out not a gymnastic trainer, or even an otologist, but an opthamologist. And in the second place, to leave such matters to the expert presupposes that the non-knower is sufficently able to identify the expert, *á la* the *technai*; but whether the knowledge with which the deliberation is concerned constitutes a *techne* is still open to question.

Nonetheless, Socrates treats their agreement as sufficient grounds upon which to begin looking for experts. What must be examined, he says, is which of them is expert concerning the attendance of souls and able to attend nobly, and which of them has had good teachers (185e4-6). They are thus concerned with special kind of *techne*, one in

which the business of the practitioner is to teach or educate. But there is something odd about Socrates' mention of teachers at this point. He states that they need to examine which of them is expert, and which of them has had good teachers. Now, when Socrates asked Melesias how they would examine for expertise in athletic competition, he asserted that the expert would be he who had learned and practised, and had good teachers. All of these things are collected by the notion of expertise. Would it not now be sufficient for Socrates to say simply that they need to examine which of them is expert--or which of them has learned, practised, and had good teachers? The mention of teachers in addition to expertise seems superfluous. Socrates emphasizes teachers, I believe, in order to draw out the response which Laches now gives: some men become more expert in certain things without teachers than with them (185e7f.). Socrates agrees with Laches, but reminds him that he would not be willing to trust those who claimed to be good craftsmen (*demiourgos*, 185e10) unless they could show him some well-made product of their *techne*. He thus elicits one criterion by which the technical expert may be judged, and he does so by appealing to the craftsmen, those experts whose products are most "visible," most easily judged.[41] But rather than treating this as the sole criterion for such judgements, Socrates proceeds to speak as if they now have two criteria: teachers, and--for those who claim no teacher--works. Now, it is surely the case that we would require some display of works if a technical expert claimed to have no teachers or professional training; but would we always be satisfied as to the expert's competence if he merely cited his teachers? We can think of at least one case in which we would not: if such an expert had a reputation for inferior workmanship. Yet Socrates treats teachers as sufficient grounds upon which to validate another's claim to expertise.

That Socrates is not unaware of the problems in so doing, however, is indicated by the speech with which he follows Laches' interjection. He first restates the subject of the deliberation: Lysimachus and Melesias are "eager" that their son's souls become as good as possible. The advisors, therefore, must display their teachers, or if they had no teachers, their works. In regards to teachers, Socrates mentions three criteria: they must themselves be good, have attended to the souls of many youths, and have "manifestly taught us." Now, in what way could the expert prove that his teachers had "manifestly taught him" except by displaying the results of such teaching, i.e., his works? The very

qualifications which, according to Socrates, the expert's teacher must possess undercut teachers as an adequate sign of expertise; the expert's works alone remain. Why then does Socrates nonetheless treat teachers as well as works as an adequate proof of expertise?

In regards to works, i.e., to the expert who has no teacher to speak of, Socrates says that he "must show whatever Athenians or foreigners, whether slave or free, have by general agreement become good because of him" (186b2-5). Now, there seems to be something peculiar about the "works" of this practitioner. With the other *technai*, and particularly those of the *demiourgoi*, one may evaluate the expert's works either directly, or by relying on the opinions of others who have done so, i.e., on the expert's reputation. This expert's works, however, seem to be essentially connected to reputation: a "well-made" work is a "well-reputed" work; one judges the work itself by looking to "general agreement" concerning it. Yet though Socrates suggests this here, we have a short while ago heard him assert that "what is to be nobly judged . . . must be judged by knowledge, not by majority" (184e8f.). We suggested then that in regards to the other *technai*, knowledge and majority opinion do not seem to be as mutually exclusive as Socrates would have them. We are able to judge of the doctor's work because we know something about health, and in particular, we know (within certain limits) when our bodies are healthy, and when they are not. But is this the case with the good of the soul? Do most men know what a good soul is, and a bad soul, both in their own case and that of other men? Is this knowledge as common as that concerning health? Or was Socrates' separation of knowledge and majority aimed at suggesting that this *techne* diverges from others on precisely this point? If so, this would seem to pose special problems for the expert in this *techne*. For if only he who possesses the art of education truly knows what a good man is, how will he be able to practise his *techne* in the face of divergent and possibly hostile opinion regarding these things? Will not his "works" be viewed not as good, but as bad or corrupt? In particular, to what extent will he be able to supplant those to whom most men look as educators? Socrates' introduction of *techne* as a means by which to judge educative expertise seems aimed at raising a problem which sets education apart from the other *technai*. For if the way in which the non-expert usually judges the expert is inadequate to judging those who claim to be able to educate, how is the political

community to provide for the education of its sons? And how is the true expert to overcome the problems raised by his disagreement with any common opinion concerning the end of his art?

Nonetheless, Socrates proceeds as if the two criteria which he has articulated are adequate to identifying the expert in attending to souls. He turns to his own case, and asserts that because he cannot satisfy either, he cannot claim to possess this art. First, he denies that he has had a teacher of this *techne*--although he has desired it from youth. What has prevented him from acquiring a teacher is his poverty: he cannot pay the sophists' fees. Nor can he claim to possess this *techne* on other grounds: he has as yet been unable to discover it on his own. Socrates does not say that he has no works to display, but since the assumption underlying the discussion is that the knowledge in question constitutes a *techne*, and since works and teachers have been separated, the reason for a lack of works can only be that one has not discovered how to produce them. Being taught and discovering oneself, then, are the alternatives: Socrates says that he would not wonder if Nicias or Laches have discovered the art or learned it from another. Yet Socrates himself, while speaking as if this knowledge is a *techne*, points to an alternative. In denying that he has been taught the *techne*, he explains that he doesn't have the wages to pay the sophists, "the only ones who proclaim themselves able to make me noble and good" (186c3f.). Should he not rather say that the sophists are the only ones who proclaim themselves able to teach him this *techne*? Socrates is not here concerned to deny that he possesses the product of this art, but the art itself. Now, he may only say this by way of indicating why he looks to the sophists as teachers of the *techne*; one naturally looks to find teachers of an art among its practitioners. But are the sophists the only men who claim to be able to educate? Do not at least some gentlemen claim to be able to as well?[42] And does not Socrates point to the gentleman (*kaloskagathos*, literally, "noble and good," 186c4) by speaking as if the end of the sophist's art is to make one noble and good? Socrates does not explicitly mention the gentlemen as possible educators, but he says something in the third part of his speech, his advice to Lysimachus, that points to them. He suggests that Lysimachus ask the generals who their teachers are, and who are expert in the same art with them, in order that if the generals do not have the leisure to educate, Lysimachus and Melesias may go to these other men and persuade them

with gifts, favours, or both, to educate both their own sons, and those of the generals (187a). Now, Socrates has already mentioned that the sophists charge fees: they are willing to teach anyone who can pay the price; there is no need to persuade them with gifts or favours. Who else, then, could Socrates have in mind than those who do not educate on a professional basis, i.e., the gentlemen?

Does the gentleman's claim to educate, then, depend upon the possession of a *techne*, perhaps the same as is possessed by the sophists? It does not seem to: rather, the ability to educate itself seems to be part of gentlemanliness, or to come to the gentleman through his practise of gentlemanliness. Laches doubtless had something such as this in mind when he asked Socrates whether men become more expert in some things without teachers than with them; indeed, we may suspect that he had himself in mind. He surely was not pointing to the conclusion which Socrates drew from his interjection--that such a man would have to display his works, and that such works would in turn imply that he had discovered the art--for Laches has indicated that he has not shown much care for education (180b2-7), and what Socrates says about his own case implies that discovery presupposes care: he has "as yet" been unable to discover this art, though he has desired it from youth. His interjection, then, reflected the view which has held to this point in the dialogue, that the man who has been educated to gentlemanliness, and has practised on the basis of that education, will in turn be capable of educating another to gentlemanliness. Now, by introducing *techne*, Socrates has opened this view to question. Indeed, he says nothing explicit about the gentlemen in his speech at all; in particular, he does not say that he considered them as possible teachers of the art of education. Apparently the only alternative to going to the sophists was attempting to find the art on his own. By treating education as a *techne*, Socrates undercuts the claim of those who by general agreement are considered to be competent to educate. Yet Socrates has also given us reason to think that education does <u>not</u> constitute a *techne*. In particular, he asserted that the teacher of this art must himself be good, must possess the product of his art; thus far, excellence has been said to be the possession of "noble deeds in war and peace." Can the sophists satisfy this requirement? Or do they not simply claim to be able to transmit the ability to perform such deeds to another? The sophist and the gentleman seem to advance claims which manifest conflicting views of the character of the knowledge which

the educative art incorporates. Whereas the sophist seems to treat this as a matter of theoretical knowledge, as something which can be attained simply through reason, the gentleman's claim implies that what is above all necessary is experience, and this presupposes the ability to gain experience, to practise, which may require more than knowledge alone. Furthermore, this conflict would seem in turn to reflect a conflict regarding the character of the excellence which each claims to teach. We may infer from what Socrates says that the sophists claim to be able to make almost anyone noble and good--well, anyone who is able to pay their fees;[43] does this not assume that this too, is entirely a matter of knowledge? And, in opposition to this, does not the gentleman's claim imply that education presupposes certain natural qualities, i.e., good breeding, that what is required above all is the ability to put what one learns into practise? The contrast in these two positions might well be encapsulated as knowledge versus virtue or character. And in light of these considerations, the use of teachers as a criterion by which to judge the expert in the art of education will be problematic from another perspective as well. For there are now two groups who claim to be able to educate, and whose claims about these things conflict. In fact, what has happened thus far in the dialogue portrays this in deed. The old men have consulted two reputable Athenian political gentlemen about the education of their sons; in their view, part of gentlemanliness is the ability to educate. They have asked these men to examine a novel, innovative fighting art professed by a man who, if not simply a sophist,[44] shares a number of their traits--or at least appears to to one of the advisors: Laches took care to note that the teachers of this *techne*, which Laches labells a "sophism", are itinerant, and he rejects the learnable on the basis of its novelty, and its attempt to supplant nature with artifice. Nicias, on the other hand, claimed that the art would be useful to know in many ways, and, if his comments about the learnable in relation to courage are any indication, he seemed to treat this art as something which could be taught to almost anyone (182c5-7). Now, if these two gentlemen were able to point to teachers, would this not simply illustrate the problem which Socrates has now raised? The generals' speeches concerning the learnable have already provided some reason to identify Laches with the city's traditional educators, and Nicias with those who would introduce the new, the sophists. Socrates' emphasis on teachers, and his identification of the sophists alone as teachers of the

techne of education, confirm what the generals' speeches implied. Indeed, by introducing *techne* and teachers, Socrates appears to be directing his comments primarily at Nicias. Socrates seems to be suggesting that the search for competent educators should begin by disregarding the city's traditional educators; throughout his speech, he seems to point to the sophists alone. In regards to works, he speaks of displaying the Athenians or foreigners whom the advisor has educated; would an Athenian citizen be likely to have many foreigners to display? Or does this not remind us of the sophists, those itinerant "cosmopolitans"? When he advises Lysimachus concerning how to question the generals, Socrates tells him to ask them not only whether they know through learning or discovering, but also with what man who is most clever (*deinotatos*, 186e4) concerning the rearing of the young they have associated; is not Socrates pointing at Nicias here, who has already indicated that he has associated with the sophist Damon? With the introduction of sophistry, Laches seems to be disqualified as an expert in attending to souls; Nicias alone remains as a possible educator.

Moreover, Socrates' speech might be taken to be implying something even more radical than the inadequacy of the city's traditional educators. He advises Lysimachus to question the generals as to whether they know through learning or discovery. If they know through learning, they are to say who is their teacher, and who else are fellow-experts in order that the old men may approach these colleagues if Nicias and Laches are not at leisure. If, on the other hand, they know through discovering, they must give an example of those whom they have made noble and good instead of base. Now, whereas Socrates provides for a course of action should the generals have this knowledge through learning but be "unavailable," he makes no such provision should they have discovered the art but not be at leisure to educate. For if the generals have learned this art from another, they will presumably be able to recommend other experts on the basis of knowledgeable evaluation--i.e., since they themselves know, they will be capable of judging whether another knows. But would this not be the case if they had discovered as well? Socrates seems to be suggesting that it would not, that if either of the generals has discovered the art, it will be imperative that he find the time to educate, because he will literally have "dis-covered" it, he will constitute its sole possessor. Socrates has just said that he has been unable to discover this art, although he has desired it from youth;

presumably he has spent a good deal of time searching for it, to the neglect of other concerns (cf. 180c2-4). And while he claims that the only thing which prevented him from hiring a sophist to teach him the art was his poverty, he does not say that the sophists are able to make another noble and good, but only that they proclaim themselves able to do so.

Yet, although we may infer these things from Socrates' speech, he certainly does not make them explicit. On the contrary, Socrates is concerned throughout his speech to warn of the dangers that attend the educative enterprise, and insofar as he emphasizes those who would introduce new ways into the city's education, his warnings must be taken to apply primarily to these men. In regard to the possibility that the generals possess this art through discovery, Socrates abruptly adds the requirement that they have practised:

> for if you are now beginning to educate for the first time, you must watch out lest the dangerous risk that is run should be not with some Carian, but with your sons and the children of friends, and lest what is said in the proverb should simply happen to you--to begin pottery on a wine-jar (187b).

Is there such a thing as a "Carian" in the educative enterprise? It would seem not; all of the educator's works are "wine-jars." How then does the educator gain such experience? Or is this not provided by the traditional ways of educating in the city? Socrates speaks of the dangers associated with innovations in education in such a way as to emphasize the peculiar importance of the traditional ways. Moreover, Socrates speaks of dangers not only to those being educated, but to the educator as well: the advisors, he says, must not run the risk of corrupting the sons of men who are <u>comrades</u> and thus getting the greatest blame from the nearest relatives; we cannot help but be reminded here of Socrates' own fate. Indeed, Socrates himself, even though he denies that he possesses this art, seems to have drawn suspicion by even attempting to discover it; we have already taken note of what Lysimachus must have thought of Socrates' unusual activity prior to his reputation being "rehabilitated" through the expressed opinions of two reputable political men. Now, Socrates himself has stated that he is concerned to discover the art of education. And although he denies that he possesses it, he certainly appears to know something about it. Indeed, if he does not, we might wonder why he did not simply deny that he was competent to advise concerning matters of education when Lysimachus asked him to give his opinion concerning the fighting art. Socrates has been presented with the opportunity

to influence the education of two young men, whose fathers desire that they become best, that they excel in the activities which, according to the city, are those proper to a man. Socrates' speeches and deeds thus far, including the speech at present under consideration, a speech which seems concerned to point to the dangers associated with innovations in a city's traditional education even as it casts doubt upon the city's understanding of these matters, surely reflect these considerations. Socrates has proceeded cautiously, but has participated nonetheless, to the point of gaining effective control over the course of the deliberation. His reasons for so doing are as yet unclear; but we might speculate at this point that one of the reasons why the Platonic dialogue on courage is peculiarly prefaced by a practical discussion of education which occupies fully half of the dialogue is that such a discussion provides an appropriate context in which to exemplify the courage and, what may be inseparable, the caution of the philosopher, the political philosopher, and particularly his attitude towards preserving the things or opinions of the city.

Socrates concludes his major speech in the dialogue by urging Lysimachus to "inquire of these men about these things, and . . . not let them depart" (187b6f.). Lysimachus, apparently, is to carry out this examination. Socrates "denies that he understands the affair." But is Lysimachus any more knowing about them than Socrates? He too has denied that he understands the affair (179bff.). If Socrates is truly interested in helping the old men to gain what they seek--as he earlier said he was--it seems that he will not do so by urging Lysimachus to examine the generals by criteria which, from what he has said, appear to be flawed. Does Socrates then really intend that Lysimachus undertake such questioning? That he does not is indicated by the very form in which he casts his advice to Lysimachus: he literally "speaks for" the man. Socrates here defers to Lysimachus as the nominal leader of the deliberation, and at the same time shows Lysimachus that he is able to take over Lysimachus' position, to "speak for" him, in the most direct manner possible--by doing so.

In response, Lysimachus says that in his opinion, what Socrates has said is fine (or noble, *kalos*, 187b8); he and Melesias would be pleased if the generals are willing to do these things. Lysimachus has indeed seen that Socrates is more capable of conducting the deliberation than he; but he has not fully understood the change in the form of the

deliberation which Socrates has proposed. The generals, he says, are to respond to Socrates' questions by giving speeches; the deliberation will not, in his eyes, consist of questions and answers, but the exchanging of speeches. But though he has certainly seen that Socrates appears to know something about these matters, his response shows that Lysimachus is now above all uncertain as to the course which he should follow. And in particular, he is uncertain whether the generals will be willing to undergo such examination as Socrates has proposed. Hence, he seems primarily concerned in this speech to encourage the generals to continue. Whereas Socrates bade him not to let the generals depart, Lysimachus is quite solicitous of their wishes; he ends his speech by asking them whether it seems to them that they should do what Socrates suggests. He approached the generals on the basis of the opinion that they would be able to educate or advise about education because they are reputable practitioners, not, as he now says, because he thought that they had likely shown some care for these things; on the contrary, as we argued above, Lysimachus thought it more likely that they had not cared for these things. Yet what Socrates has just said implies that such care is necessary to knowing about education; deeds alone are not enough. And Lysimachus has seen the generals disagree; this alone was sufficient to cause him some doubt that reputation for deeds guarantees competence concerning matters of education. Thus, he appeals to the generals for their opinion; perhaps they have something to say against what Socrates has said; Lysimachus is not convinced that they do not know. Nonetheless, he has clearly found Socrates' comments persuasive. And he seems concerned that the generals may be unwilling to continue, should Socrates' proposal be the best course to follow; should one of them be moved to withdraw, Lysimachus' community will be broken up. Lysimachus has made much of the generals' reputations; he seems to think that the admission by Nicias or Laches of a lack of credentials will entail a loss of face--particularly if only one of them should turn out to be lacking, and hence be forced to admit this in front of his counterpart. Hence, he again reminds the generals of what is at stake: their sons, too, are "pretty much of an age to be educated" (187c8f.), and they are indeed deliberating about the greatest of their things, about those who will be responsible for maintaining their names; their own possible loss of face, he implies, should be outweighed by these considerations. As well, if one of them should turn out not to know, he too will be in need of an educator, which

he may find by continuing to take part in the deliberation.

In the speeches which follow, both generals profess their willingness to participate in the deliberation under its revised terms--or rather, and more generally, to pass time with Socrates however he wishes (188c1f., 189a2)--just as at the beginning of the discussion, both generals proposed that Lysimachus alter the initial conditions of the deliberation by including Socrates. Nicias again is the first to respond to Lysimachus' proposal; what he says sets the subject which Laches' speech addresses, for Laches' speech is again a response to Nicias. Nicias speaks of Socrates' character or "ways"; Lysimachus clearly does not know Socrates, does not know what to expect from a discussion with Socrates such as he has proposed. In turn, Laches describes that aspect of Socrates' character with which he is familiar. The speeches add to and reflect the differences between the generals that have emerged thus far. Nicias speaks of Socrates' speeches, Laches of Socrates' deeds, and of the right which his deeds give him to make speeches. Furthermore, each speaks of the relation of speeches and deeds, respectively, to education, for both speak of Socrates as a teacher. Apparently, neither takes Socrates' denial that he has ability to attend to souls at face value; has Socrates not been completely frank about either his lack of teachers or discovery, or about some other way in which one might gain this knowledge? Be this as it may, the generals' remarks about Socrates as an educator serve to confirm what we suggested above, viz., that Socrates' emphasis on teachers was aimed at bringing out differences between the generals in regards to education. Nicias speaks only of Socrates' speeches; these somehow stand apart from deeds; Socrates is able to teach, and Nicias is able to learn, simply through speech. Laches' view, on the other hand, is more ambiguous, but one thing at least becomes clear: a worthy teacher is necessarily a man with deeds.

Nicias begins by asserting that from what Lysimachus has said, he indeed appears to know Socrates only through Sophroniscus, and not to have associated with him except when he was a child, perhaps in the temple or some other gathering of the deme. According to him, "blood" has had little to do with what Socrates has become. Nor, Nicias implies, would Lysimachus have much chance of becoming familiar with Socrates through meetings occasioned by duties arising from the deme; apparently, one is unlikely to run into Socrates in such places. Instead, Socrates passes his time with his "true kin"--those

nearest to him in speech. What Nicias says about these relations suggests that the kinship of which he speaks is, at least in his own case, more that of father and son than that of brothers; does Nicias think of himself as a "true son" of Socrates?[45] Socrates "of necessity" leads those to whom he is nearest in speech to give an account of their way of life; he tests these things and, apparently, points out what is not noble about them. Socrates' speeches, then, are corrective; he educates his kin about the noble, or at least about what is not noble. According to Nicias, Socrates' speeches are for the sake of deeds, for the sake of his interlocuter's way of life; Nicias, it seems, puts Socrates' speeches into practice (or so he would have us believe). Nicias seems familiar enough with Socrates to know that Socrates spends much of his time in speech; what then does he to think of Socrates' way of life? From Nicias' characterization of it, Socrates' generous, not to say selfless, activity might itself appear to be noble;[46] yet can this be the case if the noble consists in putting these speeches into practice, if speeches about the noble are for the sake of deeds? Nicias apparently has not considered the implications of Socrates' peculiar pastime, and especially of the fact that Socrates seems only to point out to him what the noble is not. In particular, he has not considered the possibility that Socrates' speeches are also or even primarily for their own sake, that Socrates spends his time examining and conversing with others not in order to "correct" their practice but by way of attempting to come to know what the noble is. Though Nicias regards himself as Socrates' "kin" in speech, he does not show this "in deed," because he does not conceive of the possibility that the noble way of life may consist in passing one's time in speeches about the noble.[47] Nicias certainly doesn't think that Socrates converses for his own sake, i.e., to become knowing about the noble, for according to him, Socrates points out those particulars of a man's way of life which are not noble; Socrates, he thinks, knows what the noble is.

Nicias' speech also provides further illustration of the caution which we have already seen him exhibit. He is, it seems, primarily concerned with guarding against what is not noble; he does not say that Socrates teaches him what is noble, but points out to him those actions which are not, and hence makes him more forethoughtful. It is almost as if the noble consists entirely in avoiding what is not noble. Nicias' speech does not reveal whether or the extent to which he believes this to be the case; it does show that he is very

concerned with avoiding such actions, and it points to the reason for his concern. Through Socrates' testing, Nicias tells Lysimachus, one necessarily becomes more forethoughtful for one's life afterwards. Nicias does not seem to mean simply one's future worldly life, but in addition and primarily the fate of one's soul after death:[48] Nicias quite possibly has the terrors of Hades, the punishment of the gods in mind. His concern with what is not noble is not for the sake of the noble, but for the sake of the gods or not offending the gods; for Nicias the noble may simply be whatever does not offend the gods. Hence, one ought to be willing--as Solon, the lawgiver of democratic Athens, said--to learn as long as one lives. One should not think that *nous* will come forward of itself in old age--the time of life when men's thoughts turn to the question of the life afterwards, and to the question of how to best provide for that life.[49] Hence too, Nicias speaks not only of the way one now lives but also of the way one has lived in the past, not only of what one is doing but what one has done that is not noble. This "looking behind" is not simply aimed at avoiding what is not noble in the future but, more importantly, at providing for the life after in another way: it is incorporated by forethought for that life because it is necessary to propitiate the gods for those offenses which one has already committed as well as to avoid committing such offenses in the future.

If Socrates' examinations truly provide one with forethought concerning these things, they would indeed be of great benefit. Well might Nicias "rejoice at keeping the man company" (188a6). Yet, we may wonder. Can a man who says that "it is necessary to suffer these things" from Socrates (188a4f.), that one "who does not flee these things but is willing" to undergo them (188b2), really rejoice at keeping him company? Nicias says that there is nothing unpleasant in being put to the test by Socrates; we suspect that he finds it positively painful. It all seems to be something which one ought to undergo for the benefits which accrue from it, but which one would in no way desire for its own sake.

Nicias here expresses his willingness to undergo it, although for a long time he has "pretty much" known that with Socrates present, their discussion would not be about the sons but about themselves. Nicias, then, thinks that the deliberation is about to move away from the subject which it has hitherto been concerned with, and that it was inevitable that this would happen. This is surely questionable; we were given reason earlier in the dialogue to think that Socrates would have remained silent had the generals agreed about

the learnable; Moreover, although the generals are to speak about themselves, their speech nonetheless seems to be for the sake of the sons. Or does Socrates' proposal that the generals show that they possess the art of education constitute what Nicias claims all of Socrates' discussions necessarily lead to--a test of their nobility? Be this as it may, Nicias says that he is ready to continue on whatever terms Socrates wishes; but his actions here and previously belie his words. Socrates' examinations will necessarily make one forethoughtful, according to Nicias; one can be educated in speech to nobility, or to avoid what is not noble--if only one is willing to undergo Socrates' testing. Nicias' actions make us doubt his willingness. His entire speech seems aimed at Laches, at providing Laches with a picture of what's in store for him should he be willing to continue the discussion with Socrates. Perhaps Nicias hopes that Laches will decline to continue, and as a result, will break up Lysimachus' partnership. Nicias no doubt believes Socrates' speeches to be beneficial, but seems reluctant to endure the pain which goes with them. He thinks that Socrates' speeches enable him to avoid what he fears, viz., offense to and consequent punishment by the gods; they do not seem to bring with them the ability to face or to overcome what he fears from Socrates' speeches-the pain which accompanies them. Perhaps Socrates' speeches presuppose the ability to face these pains; perhaps his speeches alone do not "necessarily" make one more forethoughtful. Indeed, Nicias has implied as much by speaking of those who are truly akin to Socrates; does this not suggest that Socrates' speech alone is not necessarily beneficial, that one must have a certain disposition in order to benefit from it, and in fact to be moved to "be near" Socrates in the first place? Now, Nicias says that he has known "for a long time" that the discussion would take the turn which in his eyes it is presently taking; is there not now some reason to think that he has "known" or suspected that this would happen since the beginning of the deliberation, and that his behavior at the start--his initial silence about Socrates' qualifications as an advisor, and his reference to Laches' intention, which he again does at the end of his present speech.[50] rather than simply proceeding to fulfill his own professed intention--was aimed at avoiding what Nicias thought would necessarily occur should Socrates enter the discussion?

Nicias may think that he has reason to hope that Laches will decline to continue, that, unlike himself, Laches is both unaccustomed to and uncomfortable with speeches of

this kind. Laches, however, turns out to be anything but reluctant to continue. What Nicias hopes will persuade Laches to leave off is responded to by Laches as if it were a direct challenge. Nicias hopes to avoid discussion without overtly declining to continue, and hence has mentioned how close he and Socrates are in speech, that he is quite accustomed to this sort of thing, and ends by saying, in effect, "what about you, Laches?" The tenor of Laches' response indicates that he cannot resist taking up this challenge, the challenge of a man who has just endorsed speeches without any reference to deeds, and who has previously spoken highly of both a sophist and a sophistic learnable--all of which are more than enough in Laches' eyes to establish Nicias as an opponent. Whereas Nicias thinks that the business of the deliberation has "of necessity" changed, Laches, presented with this challenge, simply forgets the earlier business; his entire speech is addressed to what Nicias has just said, and in particular to Nicias' "companions", the sophists, the men who are "all talk." The upshot of his speech is that he--unlike Nicias--is willing to engage in speech and associate only with good men, not with all men, and especially not with sophists.

Laches' attitude towards speech is indicated as effectively by his first statement as by anything else that he says. His clever speech indicates "in deed" the cleverness of speech. Speech is deceptive, and more importantly, can be used to deceive. The only proof of virtue which can be trusted, the only just proof, is deeds (189b4-6). Hence, Laches' attitude towards speech is double, like speech itself, but also single, because it is based on that which is single, that which truly reflects a man's virtue, his deeds. Deeds, unlike speeches, cannot "feign" virtue; accordingly, the authenticity of speech derives from the <u>demonstrated</u> competence of the speaker. Hence, Laches' attitude towards one who speaks about virtue or wisdom is dictated by the character of the man who is speaking: if he is "truly a man and worthy of the speeches," i.e., if his deeds match his speeches, Laches rejoices; such a man is genuinely harmonious, truly musical--unlike, say, Damon the music-teacher--and his music is artless (*atechnos*, 188d6) and Dorian, which is to say, is truly Greek.[51] On the other hand, the speaker who does not have the deeds to match his speeches pains Laches, all the more so the better he seems to speak.

Laches' attitude towards speeches, then, is determined by the deeds of the speaker; speeches do not stand on their own. Furthermore, his assessment of a man's

virtue is determined by deeds as well. Hence, although Laches claims to (and surely does) rejoice at the speeches of the "harmonious" man, it is clear that in his view, a man's virtue does not depend upon such harmony, but on one element of that harmony. A man may be virtuous without being harmonious: Laches is not experienced in Socrates' speeches, but he has observed Socrates' deeds, and this is sufficient for establishing Socrates' virtue in his eyes. A man cannot "prove" his virtue in speech alone, and indeed, the attempt to do so is like as not to be boasting (cf. 183c8-d4); while if one proves it in deed, there is no need to prove it in speech. Speech is clearly subordinate to deed.

Moreover, it seems, from what Laches says, that the virtue manifested by deeds is self-evident and stands by itself, that deeds which "look" the same are indeed the same, and do not, e.g., reflect very different motives, which could perhaps only be revealed through speech. And not only is such virtue easily recognized; it is also easily captured in speech. Both men with deeds, and those without, are capable of speaking about virtue, and they will not differ in what they say--- except insofar as the speaker is Greek or Phrygian or Lydian--but only in how well they speak. It is easy to know what virtue is, and to speak about it; what is difficult is to truly possess it, to manifest it in deed, and in this way too, speech is subordinate to deed. Indeed, Laches seems to think that the one who is truly manly will not pay much attention to speech, if only because speech contributes little or nothing to what is worth paying attention to. In the end, Laches seems to view a concern with speech as such with suspicion; perhaps in his eyes, such concern is motivated by a lack of deeds, by the desire to usurp through artful speech the ground properly occupied by deeds. Men all too easily speak about virtue, in attempting to make a claim in speech to what they lack in deed. That a man as concerned with political things as Laches professes to be, and moreover a military leader, could have this opinion about speech, and particularly about artful speech or rhetoric, is surely surprising: is it not the case that part of a general's virtue consists in speech, that part of his virtue is, for example, the ability to speak "bravely" to his troops, to "encourage" them to virtue in deed through his virtuous speech? Laches seems to regard speeches about virtue as primarily or solely speeches about deeds; such speeches either harmonize with deeds, or "unjustly" attempt to manifest "courageous deeds" in speech. Since these speeches therefore reflect deeds, it seems that the scope of Laches' musical theory is limited to these sorts

of speeches alone. It cannot accomodate certain kinds of speeches, such as those belonging to the general; nor can it accomodate speeches that ask questions such as "what is virtue?".[52]

Laches seems to regard his musical theory as applicable to all of the virtues, to virtue as a whole. However, his theory seems to work much better in regards to courage or manliness than any other virtue. Of all the virtues, courage seems to be the most difficult to feign, and in this respect courageous deeds may in a sense be self-evident. Indeed, it is questionable whether Laches' theory can be applied to the other virtues at all; are not piety and moderation, for example, much less self-evident in deed, and more easily feigned, than courage? Now, although Laches speaks of virtue, he seems to have primarily courage in mind; he speaks of hearing the speeches of one who is "truly a man" with pleasure. And he speaks not of the courage, but the virtue which Socrates displayed at Delium. We might be inclined to assert that Laches equates virtue and courage, or views all virtue in light of courage.[53] Yet Laches cannot simply equate the two, for in speaking of Socrates' virtuous deed, he names a virtue other than courage, justice. Laches' view of the relations between the various virtues is unclear; indeed, his musical theory raises further questions in this regard. Does he view the virtues entirely through courage, or does he mean to imply that a man who possesses one of the virtues will necessarily possess all of them?

Other questions are raised by Laches' mention of another of the virtues by name: wisdom. Wisdom too, apparently, must be judged with reference to deeds. But what sort of deeds reflect wisdom? Laches will later claim that wisdom has nothing to do with courage; in arguing for this claim, he will make reference to the *technai* (195aff.).[54] By wisdom, Laches appears to mean nothing so much as *techne*. What then is the relationship between wisdom and virtue in his view? At this point it is hard to say, but Laches seems in this speech to be separating the two: he speaks of hearing a man discussing virtue or some wisdom. Is it the case that, in Laches' view, wisdom has little to do with virtue. or at the least with the virtue which he emphasizes in this speech, courage?

Once he has outlined his attitude towards speeches, Laches applies it to Socrates. Laches has had experience of Socrates' deeds--he knows Socrates to be a virtuous man--hence Socrates is worthy not only of noble speeches, but of "complete frankness"

as well (189a1). The possession of deeds apparently not only makes one worthy of noble speeches, but also gives one the right to speak them frankly, to ignore the dictates of politeness. Indeed, Laches claims that Socratic scrutiny will cause him great pleasure. He too accedes to Solon's saying, but unlike Nicias, not without qualification: Laches is willing in growing old to be taught many things, but the teacher must be a good man. What Laches expects to learn is not clear: given the direction which the conversation has taken, perhaps he expects to learn something about how virtue is instilled; he deferred to Socrates on this matter in his opening comments. But this much is clear: he does not expect to learn what virtue is--he is, after all, only willing to learn from good men, which presupposes knowledge of what a good man is; nor does he anticipate that Socrates will point to any lack of virtue or nobility in his way of life--after all, he "shared the danger" with Socrates at Delium.[55] One suspects that the pleasure which Laches expects from Socrates' examination arises from nothing so much as his anticipation that he will not be found lacking in his nobility or way of life--and that Nicias will (cf. 197d6-8). He has again in this speech been waging war against Nicias; might he not be anticipating that Socrates will stand with him in speech against Nicias, just as he earlier expected that Socrates would stand with him in regards to the worth of the learnable?

Socrates replies to the generals' speeches not by repeating his earlier denial of his competence to teach, but by noting that the generals can't be blamed for not being ready to consult and examine together. Does Socrates think that the generals would be open to blame if they were not ready to continue, and if so, why? His reply seems to indicate that the deliberation has not changed into an inquiry regarding the generals' ways of life; they are going to both consult and examine; the examination will be part of, will be governed by, the subject of the consultation. At any rate, the generals have both agreed to continue in whatever manner Socrates wishes, and with their agreement, the uncertainty which Lysimachus exhibited in his last speech has now been dissolved. Lysimachus now explicitly hands the deliberation over to Socrates, telling him to "examine in my place, on behalf of the young men" (189c4f.); he thus completes in speech what Socrates has already effected in deed. But this relinquishment is accompanied by a reminder of the work of the deliberation; what the generals have just said, and particularly Nicias' speech, suggests that Socrates' participation in the conversation will lead it away from the subject

with which it began. Lysimachus thus hastens to mention that subject: he tells Socrates that on account of his age, he forgets many things that he intends to ask--hence Socrates is better equipped to lead the discussion--and that he does not remember what he hears very well, especially if other speeches come up in the middle--hence Socrates should take care that the deliberation stays "on track."

189c-190e: Second Reconstitution of the Deliberative Community

Socrates accepts the role which Lysimachus has just handed to him, and apparently accepts the terms upon which Lysimachus hands it over: he says that he and the generals "must obey" Lysimachus and Melesias (189d4f.). Yet rather than going through what has been proposed, as Lysimachus enjoined him to (189d1f.), Socrates immediately proceeds to once again reset the course of the deliberation. Perhaps it would not be bad, he says, to examine what teachers the advisors have had, or what others they have made better--i.e., the very things which Socrates himself proposed that they examine--but he thinks that a different sort of examination would also lead to the same result, and would be somewhat more from the beginning (189d5-e3). Socrates explains what he has in mind: they are to examine whether the advisors know what virtue is. Such knowledge would indeed seem to be "more from the beginning;" one must presumably know what virtue is in order to know how to produce it. Yet Socrates' proposal must seem suspect to the old men at least, and we might wonder whether Socrates is now breaking the obligation which he has just moments ago entered into. The old men are not interested in "the beginning," but in "the conclusion," and if, as Socrates says, this kind of examination will lead to the same result as the previous one, that it is more from the beginning would seem to be not more but less reason to prefer it to the other. Furthermore, it not clear on the surface at least that this examination will lead to the same result as the other, for knowledge of what virtue is is only a condition of knowing how to produce it. Such an examination would only lead to the same result if the examinees turn out to not know what virtue is. Socrates appears to have proposed a test that he is confident both of the generals will fail.

Socrates first outlines in broad terms the sort of examination that he has in mind, and then attempts to clarify by making use, for the second time, of the example of the

eye. This example falls in the exact arithmetic center of the dialogue. "If we happen to know," he says, "that sight, when present in eyes, make those[56] in which it is present better, and if we are futhermore able to make it be present in eyes, it is clear that we know what sight itself is, concerning which we could become counsellors as to how someone might obtain it in the easiest and best fashion"(190a1-5). Therefore, since they have been summoned by the old men to a consultation on the souls of their sons, on the way in which virtue might be present to them,[57] they must know what virtue is. Here, at last, Socrates speaks concretely about the aspect of the soul with which they are concerned. They are concerned with virtue, which, following the analogy of eye and sight, is the soul's specific power. The experts are not to directly demonstrate knowledge of how to produce virtue--which is presumably still the knowledge specific to them as experts--rather than displaying signs of that knowledge, but instead, are to show that they know what virtue is. The examination has thus departed from the model of the *technai*: the experts are now to show that they possess the knowledge that was earlier assumed to provide the basis upon which the non-expert judged the expert. And if this knowledge is common to expert and non-expert alike, the examination which Socrates has proposed would seem to be irrelevant; his proposal suggests, as he has already intimated, that the non-experts are not knowing about these matters as well. But this seems to pose a problem: how are the "non-experts" to determine whether the expert speaks knowingly about virtue? Is it the case that the non-experts will have to become knowing about virtue themselves? If so, this in turn raises the question whether the non-knowers are capable of becoming knowing about these things; to say nothing else, Lysimachus and Melesias are old men (cf. 201a2-b8)--indeed, Lysimachus has just claimed that the debilities of old age have affected his capacity for learning. And Socrates himself indicates that this is no small undertaking: to examine the whole of virtue, he says, "would perhaps be rather much" (190c8f.). Yet perhaps there is an alternative to this: what Socrates has said thus far suggests that he may possess a kind of expertise, an expertise in the judging of experts,[58] which seems somehow to be between the old men, who by their own admission do not know, and the generals, the supposed experts; perhaps a man such as Socrates is what the old men need. Moreover, perhaps Socrates' practice of his expertise will provide the groundwork for the old men's project, which presupposes that

they know what virtue is. Yet Socrates' expertise may only be able to determine that another is not knowing;[59] can it provide the old men with a competent educator, or is its competence limited to this negative function? And again, the search or examination for virtue is an imposing work, and the sons are "pretty much of an age to be educated" (187c9f.; cf. 179a5-9); might not the moment be lost if their education must wait for the conclusion of an examination such as Socrates has suggested or of a search for knowledge of virtue?

Be this as it may, Socrates asserts, and Laches agrees, that if they do not "at all" know what virtue happens to be, they will be unable to give counsel as to how to obtain it. Therefore, he says to Laches, they assert that they know what it is; Laches replies that they assert it indeed. And, Socrates continues, since they know it, they could doubtless say what it is. Again Laches emphatically agrees; since saying what virtue is is to be the test of knowing what it is, presumably the reverse holds true as well: if they are unable to say what it is, they will be unable to claim that they know what it is. Socrates responds with a further revision: to examine the whole of virtue would perhaps be too great an undertaking; it would be easier to examine whether they are knowing about some part of it. To this, too, Laches agrees. What part, then, Socrates asks,should they choose--or should it clearly be that which the learning about armour seems to aim at? Socrates declares, and Laches agrees, that to the many it presumably aims at courage; therefore, they will try to state what courage is.

Courage has finally assumed center stage; it does so at the center of the dialogue which, according to tradition, is the Platonic dialogue on courage. And of the virtues, courage at first glance appears to be the obvious choice for discussion. However, upon reflection, the choice of courage becomes less obvious. The dialogue has certainly been concerned with matters that seem to involve courage. Yet Socrates has also moved the discussion beyond such matters to a consideration of who is expert in attending to souls, in producing virtue as a whole. Should they not consider the whole of virtue? Socrates offers one reason for not doing so: to examine the whole of virtue is a great work; it is easier, he says, to examine a part. But this is surely questionable: it would only seem easier if virtue is simply the sum of its individual parts, and this has not been established; indeed, stating what courage is would seem to dictate that some consideration be given to

this very question. On the other hand, since the specific business of the deliberation is still presumably to decide whether Stesilaus' learnable is suitable for the young men, perhaps courage is the most relevant virtue to consider. Yet courage is not chosen for discussion by consideration of whether it is the virtue at which the learnable seems to aim, or even by the interlocuter's agreement that this seems to be the case, but by agreement that to the many this seems to be the case. Why then does Socrates move the discussion to a consideration of courage, and why in the manner in which he does so?

We may say, first, that based upon what we have seen of the generals thus far, an examination involving courage seems the most likely of all the virtues to reintroduce and perhaps crystallize their earlier disagreement. The generals' first disagreement was about means, about the usefulness of the fighting in armour. But in the course of that disagreement, both mentioned what Socrates has now introduced as the end of the deliberation. Socrates followed their disagreement by taking over the leadership of the discussion, but he prevented or postponed further disagreement between the generals by speaking in formal terms--of "the thing itself"--when he suggested that since they were deliberating for the sake of the soul, they ought to examine who was expert in attending to it. Do not the generals' initial brief comments about courage provide us with some reason to think that they will disagree as much about courage as they did regarding the learnable's worth?

Whether Socrates wishes to provoke further disagreement between the generals, and why he might wish to do so, is at this point not entirely clear. But he also seems to have a more immediate reason for suggesting that they discuss courage. Socrates chooses this virtue by referring to the opinion of the many. Now, Socrates in fact seems to adopt the many's perspective throughout the present discussion. Socrates begins by separating the "thing itself" and that which makes it better: he speaks of one who "happens to know" that sight makes the eye better. But everyone knows that sight makes the eye better, except, perhaps, those who are congenitally blind, although even they are likely aware that they lack something; what else could make the eye, the organ whose work it is to see, better? And do not most people know this because they know what sight is on the basis of their possession of it? Such being the case, it would seem that one who claimed to be a doctor would have to demonstrate his competence not by showing that he

has knowledge of what sight is, but that he has knowledge of the eye and its structure, for his ability to attend to eyes depends upon this knowledge. And, following Socrates' analogy, it would seem that they should be examining for knowledge of the soul, for the ability to attend to souls depends upon this knowledge. Indeed, until Socrates introduced his latest revision to the course of the deliberation, they were concerned with the soul, and with the art of attending to souls. And his proposal that they consider not virtue, but a part of virtue, of necessity raises questions about the soul. Socrates himself indicates that this issue should come to our minds when he compares virtue to sight. He illustrates the sort of examination that he has in mind by repeating, almost word for word, his general outline of it, using the example of eye and sight (cf. 189e3-7 with 190a1-5). But then he adds the ear and its specific power to the example: "for if we do not even know this thing--what sight is or what hearing is--we would hardly be counsellors and doctors worthy of mention concerning either eyes or ears, as to the way in which someone might obtain hearing or sight in the noblest manner" (190a6-b1). While Socrates is ostensibly comparing "virtue and soul" to "sight and eye," his mention of hearing, and the subsequent agreement to examine a part of virtue, raise the question of the nature of the parts of virtue and their relation to the soul. Sight and hearing are the powers of eye and ear, respectively; that is to say, of parts of the body; Socrates' example suggests that the parts of virtue belong to parts of the soul.[60] Does not the notion that virtue has parts require consideration of the nature of these parts, which is to say, some consideration of the soul itself? Why then does Socrates not propose that they examine for knowledge of these matters? In initiating the deliberation, Lysimachus and Melesias made two fundamental assumptions: first, that the best man is able to transmit his excellence (and hence that they, lacking distinquished virtue, lack the ability to produce it in others); and second, that the advisors and the advised share a common knowledge of what the best man is. On the basis of the generals' disagreement, Socrates undermined the first assumption by introducing *techne*. However, as we have seen, the model of the *techne* presupposed that expert and non-expert alike know virtue when they see it, and hence that the non-expert is able to judge the work of the expert in attending to souls; it left the deliberation's second assumption intact. But Socrates has intimated--indeed, did so in the very act of introducing *techne*[61]--that this assumption, too, is questionable; the examination

based in *techne* is flawed. There is, then, a need for an examination that corrects this flaw, which is to say, an examination that undermines the deliberation's second assumption. It is for this reason that Socrates separates virtue from the soul, and then, using the opinion of the many, separates courage as the part to be examined. For courage seems to be the most "visible" of the virtues. Courageous acts seem to stand out, to be immediately evident; what courage is seems to be plain "to those who have eyes to see." Socrates turns to the question of courage in discussion with Laches, who has expressed the view that virtue, by which he seems above all to mean manly virtue, is something that almost anyone can capture in speech. And when Socrates asks him to try to state what courage is, Laches apparently finds this request so easy to meet that he is moved to utter an oath: "By Zeus, Socrates, it is not difficult to state" (190e4). To the "visibility" of virtue corresponds the fact that most men feel utterly confident that they know what courage is; they surely do not base their claim to such knowledge in the claim that they possess knowledge of the soul. By separating virtue from the soul, and then courage from virtue, Socrates provides for a discussion which is on the terms of the many--and in particular, the old men; a discussion which illustrates the difficulties involved in knowing what courage is is much more likely to shake their confidence that they possess such knowledge than a discussion of the soul itself.[62]

We might well wonder why Socrates is concerned to do this to the old men. After all, as we noted earlier, it would seem that they are educable only to a limited extent. In a somewhat similar situation in the *Republic*, Socrates questions the elderly Cephalus in such a way as to induce him to excuse himself from further discussion, rather than in a way that would undermine his beliefs about the virtue justice. What good will it do to shake the old men's beliefs about the virtue courage? Socrates himself points to a possible reason. Once he and Laches have agreed to discuss courage, Socrates proposes in passing that after they examine this--presumably, after they have stated what courage is--they shall examine in what way it might be present in young men, to the extent that it can be present from practices and learnables (190d8-e2). After speaking about courage they will turn to a matter which, to this point, has not been considered. Yet, as we have pointed out, a consideration of the extent to which virtue is brought into being through learnables and practices, which is to say, of the respective roles of nature and nurture in

becoming best, seemed to be required from the outset because it too is "more from the beginning" than the point from which the deliberation proceeded. Now, Socrates initiated the present discussion because it would be "more from the beginning," and he illustrated the sort of examination that he had in mind by speaking of eye and sight, of the man who is able to "make sight be present" in eyes. Now, strictly speaking, no doctor is able to "put sight" into blind eyes; the extent to which he is able to treat eyes depends, first and foremost, on the condition that the eyes themselves are in.[63] The example of the eye raises the question whether the sons, like eyes, can be profitably "attended to." To this point, one might easily have forgotten that the sons are even present. By making mention of these things, Socrates indicates that he has them very much in mind.

190e-194b: Laches On Courage

Laches responds to Socrates without any hesitation; nothing in Socrates' request gives him any pause; on the contrary, it moves him to utter an oath. Laches defines courage as follows: "If someone should be willing to remain in the ranks and defend himself against the enemies and should not flee, know well that he would be courageous" (190e5f.). Laches, the practical political man, offers not a universal definition, but an instance of courage, the courage of a hoplite. He speaks of the courage which he has presumably most often observed, i.e., of a courage that is common. His definition reflects the city's definition of courage, the courage expressed by the city's laws: the city requires that at the least, its hoplites remain in the ranks and not flee. That this is the case is indicated by Laches' earlier, rather perplexing statements about Socrates' behavior at Delium. Laches has twice referred to those actions in terms of high praise, but while he has called those actions virtuous, he never referred to them as courageous, although they surely have a claim to be regarded as such. Laches recognizes that Socrates' actions deserve to be regarded as virtuous--indeed, he regards them as of outstanding virtue: for while his fellow-hoplites fled, Socrates did not; once the ranks were broken, Socrates was willing to calmly retreat, to stand on his own.[64] He acted beyond the call of duty or what the city calls for, and in doing so, distinguished himself from his fellow hoplites. But while Laches recognizes the outstanding nature of Socrates' deed, he cannot "name" it: Socrates appears to Laches to possess more than ordinary or hoplite courage, which for

Laches is courage.[65] Socrates' deeds at Delium did not move Laches to think about courage, to question his understanding of it; nor does he pause here for reflection before responding to Socrates' questioning speech about courage. This general apparently sees nothing incongrous in the fact that he defines courage as something which belongs to the hoplite alone, and moreover, which only arises when the hoplite is "acting as a hoplite," when he is in the ranks.

Socrates responds that Laches speaks well, but has not answered what he intended him to answer; perhaps, Socrates says, he is to blame for this. The man of whom Laches speaks, he continues, is presumably courageous. Laches replies that he at least says this; Socrates, we should note, says that he does as well. But whereas Laches spoke of one who is willing to remain in the ranks, Socrates speaks simply of one who remains in the ranks. Are these equatable? Is the fact that one remains in the ranks of itself sufficient indication that he is willing to do so? Laches does not notice Socrates' alteration, and in failing to do so, he again reflects the city's perspective, for what is important to the city is "the deed itself," i.e., simply that its hoplites remain in the ranks.[66]

Socrates now cites three counter-examples to what Laches has just said. These are ostensibly concerned to widen Laches' definition: one may show courage in fleeing as well as remaining. Socrates speaks first of the Scythian horsemen, and then of the horses of Aeneas and Aeneas himself. Laches is not convinced; these are not Greeks; the courage of which he is speaking is Greek courage, and the Greeks fight as he has said. In response, Socrates turns to an example which is sure to persuade Laches, for it involves the Lacedaemonians, who are, as we have seen, the most Greek of the Greeks in Laches' eyes. Socrates relates what "they claim" happened at Plataea: the Lacedaemonians "were not willing" to remain and fight against the Persian troops who carried wicker shields, but fled; when the Persian ranks were broken, they turned around like horsemen, and thus were victorious. Apparently, Greeks do fight fleeing as well as remaining; Laches' definition of even Greek courage is insufficient.

However, if Socrates' examples are intended to do only this, they must surely strike us as odd.[67] Indeed, we may wonder why Socrates employs these examples rather than what Laches himself has repeatedly emphasized: Socrates'--and, by implication, his own--behavior at Delium. Does Socrates refrain from employing this example simply out

of modesty? Perhaps; yet it seems that this would have been not only sufficient, but also peculiarly appropriate for countering Laches' definition, since it involves Laches' own deeds (cf. 193e2-3) which, as we pointed out above, he does not seem to include within the domain of courage. Socrates does not employ this example because it is not in accord with what he wishes to stress in his reply to Laches. Instead, he uses examples which not only widen Laches' definition, but also point to the connection of the courage of which Laches spoke to the city: this courage is for the sake of and hence is governed by the city's ends, and in the first instance by victory. As such, it is subordinate in an immediate sense to strategy, to the *strategos* (general). Socrates make reference to these things in his initial reply to Laches' definition by making a slight change in what Laches has said: whereas Laches spoke of remaining in the ranks and defending, Socrates speaks of remaining in the ranks and fighting; victory requires more than simply defense or not being overcome. So too, the example of the Scythians suggests that this courage arises within the context of the dictates of strategy. Indeed, the Scythian example arguably does not involve courage at all. A characteristic Scythian strategy, according to Herodotus,[68] which arose from their nomadic way of life, was to avoid engaging in combat through flight, either entirely in the face of superior force, or until they were in a situation most advantageous to attack. Socrates only mentions Scythian flight; in what way could such flight be conceived to involve courage? Does not this aspect of their strategy rather preclude any courageous action? The Lacedaemonian example points in this direction as well. On the surface, Socrates might be taken to mean that the Lacedaemonian troops lost and then recovered their courage. What he means to imply is rather that the Lacedaemonian actions were the results of commands given by the Lacedaemonian generals. Socrates' example is particularly appropriate to demonstrating the subordination of battlefield courage to strategy, for the Lacedaemonian strategy dictated that the troops dissemble cowardly flight, the apparent opposite to the courage of which Laches spoke; the Lacedaemonian "deeds" were not what they appeared to be, and this deception gained them the victory.[69]

Both the Scythian and the Lacedaemonian examples, then, involve a courage which occurs within the context of an order imposed by strategy, and it is this which Socrates is attempting to bring to Laches' attention; hence, he is silent about their behavior at Delium,

which occurred outside of any such order, and indeed, only when such order had been destroyed. Both examples, since they involve behavior that is ordered by strategy, point to strategy or knowledge, to what is addressed by Socrates' central example. The example is double, and hence, suitably, is open to both a literal and a more metaphoric interpretation. It is the only one of the three mentioned by Socrates which concerns a form of combat that does not involve order, or a structure of rank, in battle; the Homeric charioteers fought on their own. And whereas in his other examples Socrates spoke only of fighting, here he speaks only of knowledge. Homer, he says, lauded Aeneas for his "knowledge of flight;" order takes the place of knowledge, and when such order is absent, the presence of knowledge is essential. But Socrates implies that Aeneas' wonderful horses possessed the same sort of knowledge as Aeneas; according to him, "Homer . . . declared somewhere that they knew how to 'pursue and flee very swiftly hither and thither'" (191a10-b1). What Homer actually says is that the horses "have knowledge of the plain, how to pursue and to flee very swiftly hither and thither over it,"[70] i.e., that they are sure-footed and swift. But these qualities, and the use of them, must be guided if they are to be put to use in battle.[71] Again recalling that Plato often uses the horse as a metaphor for the city, we may in this instance say that the example of Aeneas and his horses points to the need for men who stand above the city's troops, who are able to guide them in battle.

Socrates' examples, then, are intended not only to widen the field of courage, but also to raise the question of the relation of knowledge to courage: can the general Laches account for the courage specific to him by defining courage as simply a willingness to stand fast? Socrates is attempting to show Laches that he cannot; he is attempting to open Laches to knowledge, to force Laches to think about knowledge in relation to courage, by raising the stock of knowledge in Laches' eyes. We have seen the value which Laches places upon courage--he seemed to have courage more than any other virtue in mind in putting forward his musical theory--and we have seen the value which he places upon victory as well (see 182e5-183a2, 194af.). By countering Laches' definition with examples that point to the relation between hoplite, and more generally, military courage, and strategy, Socrates means to imply that knowledge is at least as essential to victory as courage, and moreover, that courage, or at least that form of courage which

aims at victory, itself requires the guidance of knowledge.

Once Socrates has widened Laches' definition within the context of battle, he proceeds to extend it beyond battle in two different respects. First, he speaks of courage in circumstances other than battle: he is asking, he says, about those who are courageous not only in heavy-armed soldiery but in every form of warfare, and not only in war but in dangers at sea, and towards sickness, poverty, and "even" politics (191d1-6). Socrates does not elaborate on the various circumstances which he mentions; it is hard to say for sure what sort of behavior he has in mind, although we can think of many likely examples. He takes care to extend the field of courage not only to private situations, but regarding the political as well; military courage does not exhaust the manifestations of courage even in the political realm.[73]

Socrates next widens the scope of courage even further: he is inquiring not only about those who are courageous towards pains and fears, "but also those who are clever (*deinos*) at fighting against desires or pleasures, whether remaining or turning around in retreat--for there are presumably some courageous ones, Laches, in such things too" (191d6-e2). It appears from this that what Socrates wants from Laches is a definition which pertains primarily or wholly to the soul. He speaks of no situations in which men show courage against desires or pleasures, and once Laches agrees that there are courageous men in such things, Socrates speaks of those who possess courage in fears, those in pains, those in desires, and those in pleasures, and of those who possess cowardice in these things, rather than those who possess courage and cowardice in war, sickness, poverty, etc. Laches is to define with reference to the soul itself, rather than with reference to the soul in relation to anything outside of itself. He does so, I believe, in order to elicit the core of Laches' view of courage. Socrates here appears to conflate what are usually considered to be two distinct virtues: courage and moderation. Whether he believes that moderation is simply a species of courage--or that courage is a species of moderation?--is unclear; there are "presumably," he says, some courageous ones in such things too. Or perhaps he means to suggest that in order to be considered truly courageous, a man must possess moderation, or at least a species of moderation, as well. Laches also does not appear to separate them: he agrees very strongly with what Socrates asserts. Laches appears to view all of the virtues as species of courage, or perhaps more

precisely, to view all of them through courage: all involve something which seems central to and most fully expressed by courage, for they all involve a kind of warfare that is internal to the soul, a fighting against fears, pains, desires, and pleasures. Socrates himself, in summarizing what he said previously about various methods of waging war, speaks in a way that might be taken to point at this very notion. Socrates there speaks of hoplitery and then of cavalry, and then generalizes to "every form of warfare." This is the only use of "form" (*eidos*, 191d3) in the dialogue; it is used with a word, *polemikos*, which means "concerning or for war," and this is the only use of this word as well; elsewhere, including immediately below, Socrates uses the more common *polemos*. Is Socrates suggesting the view that courage always involves some participation in warfare, be it on the battlefield or in the soul? This supposition is supported by what Socrates says when he turns to the soul itself: he speaks of "fighting against" one's psychic enemies, whether by remaining or turning around in retreat. For Laches, then, courage essentially involves this internal warfare: it is necessary both that one of these objects be present in a man's soul, and that one fight against that object, in order for courage to arise. Yet Socrates suggests that fighting against these things may involve not only remaining, but turning around in retreat;[73] how could retreating in the face of such things be considered courageous by Laches, or anyone else, for that matter? Socrates himself suggests that Laches could not so regard such retreats. Some men, he says, possess courage in pleasures, some in pains, some in desires, and some in fears; and others possess cowardice in these same things. Laches agrees; Socrates then asks him what each of these things--i.e., courage and cowardice--is. Courage has a single opposite, cowardice, and this must for Laches be the opposite to remaining against these passions. Yet Socrates appears to divide courage in regards to the motions of the psyche; there are apparently two ways in which one may fight against these motions. He speaks not simply of "retreating," but of "turning around in retreat." His choice of words suggests "turning away,"[74] a courage which does not involve the endless necessity of remaining against one's fears, desires, etc., but which rather "fights against" these things by somehow leaving them behind. And if this is the case, then Socrates' speech suggests that this kind of courage is not simply the end result of this "turning around in retreat," but the activity of "turning and retreating" as well. Are we meant to think that Socrates' own activity in this

way constitutes a kind of courage?[75]

Laches still does not fully comprehend what Socrates is asking for. Socrates therefore makes use of an example, a particular, to show Laches that he is after something much more general than Laches' definition. It is as if Socrates was asking what speed (*tachos*, 192a1) is, for instance in running, or cithara-playing, or speaking, or learning. If someone asked him what it is which in all things he calls quickness (or swiftness, *tachutes*, 192a10), he would say that it is the power of accomplishing many things in a short time. Why, of all the examples which Socrates could have used, does he choose this one? First of all, perhaps, to draw out Laches' second attempt to define courage; Laches no longer has to say what courage is, but what power is involved in courage. Still, many other examples would have served this end just as well. Socrates makes use of quickness because quickness is very germane to what they are discussing, and in particular to what Laches has said about courage and what, we must surmise, Socrates anticipates that he will say in response to this example.

That such is the case is indicated by the definition which Socrates offers: quickness is the power to accomplish many things in a short time. This seems to be an adequate definition of quickness, at least in physiological terms. But Socrates' mention of "many things" in addition to "a short time" points to a problem with his definition. He speaks as if quickness alone enables a man to accomplish many things in a short time. This may not always be the case; in particular, it is not always the case in regards to running, which Socrates takes care to mention when he gives his definition. Now, quickness alone may well be sufficient in the case of the sprinter; it surely is not in the case of the distance runner.[76] The latter requires something in addition: endurance. Indeed, what the distance-runner lacks in speed may to a certain extent be compensated for by an ability to endure to a greater extent than his more fleet competitors. And we can conceive of instances where endurance would be necessary in all of the examples of quickness which Socrates gives. The indefiniteness which arises from Socrates' mention of "many things" raises the question of the role of endurance in and its relation to quickness. In some cases quickness would seem to be a necessary but not sufficient power, which cannot do without the additional power of endurance.

Socrates' definition also points to what seems to be another "kind" of quickness. We speak of those who are "quick to speak," or "quick to take offense," or "quick to anger." But this kind of quickness does not seem to be encompassed by Socrates' definition--unless we disregard the mention of "many things." Socrates means us to think of this aspect of quickness as well, and means us to do so regarding speech; hence, he mentions "voice" as well as "running" in articulating his definition. For when we notice that quickness in respect of voice could mean "quick to speak" as well as "speaking quickly," we should also notice that Socrates' present interlocuter is very quick to speak, especially when Nicias is involved; this will become especially evident in the discussion with Nicias about courage.

Socrates' example does indeed seem to help Laches provide a similar definition regarding courage: in his opinion, courage is by nature in all cases a certain endurance of the soul. We have noted that Socrates has spoken to Laches in such a way as to elicit a definition of this kind. Further, we have seen that endurance has some sort of relation to the example that Socrates used; might the reverse not be the case as well? Or might it be the case that Socrates has in fact pointed to the very thing that is missing from Laches' definition? Laches' first definition of courage was literally that of the hoplite, and his present definiton is simply a generalization of that particular case to all cases of courage. Now, the hoplite himself may not need any sort of quickness, but his general surely does. Do we not say that one mark of a good leader, and perhaps of a good military leader in particular, is boldness or decisiveness? Surely those commanding the Lacedaemonians at Plataea displayed such quickness in what was, especially for the Lacedaemonians, an innovative tactic. Furthermore, this quickness seems to involve both thought and action, both quickness in grasping what is required by a particular situation, and quickness in acting upon that perception. Quickness, then, as well as endurance, seems to be involved in courage (cf. 193d1). Moreover, quickness itself often seems to be, or to look like, courage; it often seems to have no need of endurance, as with the sprinter, or perhaps it is capable of taking the place of endurance. Men who are bold at least sometimes appear to lack any fear against which to endure, or by their quickness they seem somehow able to disregard, rather than endure against, risks. Perhaps such men, if they are to be truly courageous, have need of endurance in another way, a way that would make sense of

Socrates' inclusion of what are commonly regarded as the objects of moderation in his list of the objects of courage. For if a man who possesses the quickness that we call boldness is "too quick," too prone to taking risks, then it would seem that what he is in need of is moderation, of endurance against his boldness or that which urges him to motion.[77] Courage, then, seems to involve quickness as well as endurance; and in fact, these seem to represent two poles of courage, in each of which different men partake to differing extents; perhaps courage is a certain combination of quickness and endurance, or alternatively, perhaps different combinations of these things represent different kinds of courage. Again, we noted the hoplitical kind of courage, which seems to be a lower kind of courage, and which seems to be primarily endurance; from this we may distinguish a higher kind of courage, which relies to a much greater extent on quickness. Such a division might account for what we regard as outstanding acts of courage; and Laches too may somehow recognize such a division, although here, because he is trying to identify that which is common to all acts of courage, his definition does not seem to encompass these. That this may be the case is suggested by Laches' mention of "wonderful virtue."

Socrates' example, then, again suggests that Laches has been speaking of a courage that many can possess. And he again appears to be attempting to open Laches to a higher kind of courage, a courage that is more able to stand on its own. But if there is a distinction to be made between quickness and endurance with regards to self-sufficiency, Socrates implies that such a distinction can be made regarding quickness itself as well. In speaking of quickness, Socrates seems to have in mind the "raw" power of quickness, the natural ability to do something quickly. This does not, however, seem to be all that there is to quickness, or rather to the use of that power. To refer again to the distance runner: what is essential to his activity--and particularly in regards to his endurance--is pacing, i.e., the regulation of his quickness. Similarly, with cithara-playing, the ability to play quickly must be regulated according to what is being played, and in this case, the musician's quickness seems in a sense to be part of his knowledge of how to play the cithara; successful performance of a piece of music involves not only knowing how to actually play the instrument, but also a knowledge of tempo.[78]And with speech too, we can think of situations where quick or slow speech is appropriate. Socrates points to just this in speaking first of speed (*tachos*), which happens to exist for us in running, etc., and which

we possess in the actions of legs, etc., and then mentioning not speed, but quickness (*tachutes*), which seems to involve more than simply speed. Now, it is noteworthy that the only example used by Socrates to which such knowledge or regulation of quickness does not seem to apply is that of learning. Is there any situation in which quickness at learning should, or could, be "slowed down?" In regards to this activity, "natural quickness" is always the appropriate quickness. Is Socrates suggesting that this sort of quickness is most fully "quickness," or partakes of it to the greatest extent, and at the same time is most self-sufficient? And, analogously, might he be implying that courage is more self-sufficient the more it tends towards knowledge?

At any rate, Laches manages to articulate the sort of general definition which Socrates desires. He is still uncertain about this manner of proceeding, however; he says that courage "is a certain endurance of the soul, if one must say about courage what it is by nature in all cases" (192b9f.). Perhaps Socrates' mention of quickness has stirred something in Laches; he certainly seems hesitant about attempting to encompass all manifestations of courage within a single definition. Nonetheless, he does so, by generalizing his first definition; courage is still a kind of remaining against the enemy; not all kinds of endurance qualify as courage. Apparently not all "enemies" which call for endurance are worthy of the name courage; Laches here adds a further distinction: on what basis does he make it? Moreover, Laches says that this endurance is "by nature"; in his eyes, courage is, or depends upon, a power of the soul which is natural, which is not the result of education. And conversely, cowardice is simply the lack of this natural power (cf. 184b4-7).[19]

Socrates now has what he has been seeking from Laches. But the definition is apparently still lacking; Socrates has further questions for Laches. it is notable, however, that he does not question the argument that courage involves endurance. Laches has articulated something essential to courage. What is still unclear is the relation of this thing to courage; Socrates' questions attempt to determine this. He first tells Laches that it looks to him at least as if not quite all endurance appears to Laches to be courage. Does this imply that all courage involves endurance of some kind? Laches was uncertain; Socrates leaves the question open. At any rate, Socrates' observation is certainly true; Laches himself said that courage is a "certain" endurance. But he surely does not have the

kind of division which Socrates now introduces in mind. Socrates "pretty much knows" that Laches holds courage to be among the altogether noble things. Laches assures him of this and more: courage is among the noblest things. Well, Socrates asks, is endurance accompanied by prudence (*phronesis*, 192b8) noble and good? "Certainly," says Laches. And endurance accompanied by folly is the opposite, and therefore harmful and evil-doing? Again Laches agrees. Would Laches then assert, Socrates asks, that the latter is something noble? Laches reply is now more guarded: "it certainly would not be just, at any rate" (192d6). Endurance of this sort, Socrates continues, is not courage, since it is not noble, while courage is noble. This is true, according to Laches; therefore, Socrates concludes, prudent endurance would be courage--according to Laches' argument! Laches answers "it seems so"; he seems very unsure about this. And well might he be. Socrates' argument is strange, to say the least. Neither prudence and folly, nor the noble and the good and their opposites, are examined. Socrates treats endurance as something which is always accompanied by either prudence or folly; these opposites apparently exhaust the possibilities. Yet Socrates agreed that Laches' initial definition qualified as at least an instance of courage, and it is hard to see how this kind of courage involves, or necessarily involves, prudence. Indeed, Laches' definition, and Socrates' counter-examples, pointed to the private's courage, to courage shown "in the ranks," and this kind of courage seemed to be accompanied not by prudence, but by obedience, most immediately to one's commander, and ultimately to the city's laws. Nor is what Socrates says about the noble and the good any more clear. To say nothing else, it is not self-evident that what is noble does not cause harm or evil. Indeed, is not courage itself a possible example of something noble which may cause harm, and sometimes the greatest harm, to the man who acts courageously? Socrates surely means us to notice this, because he speaks of two opposites to the good, and a primary denotation of one of them, *blaberos* (translated "harmful"), is physical harm or injury. Yet Socrates implies, and Laches agrees, that endurance accompanied by prudence, which is both noble and good, does not do harm. What Socrates says about the noble and the good, and in particular, what his statements imply about the relation between them, needs much more consideration: that foolish endurance is not noble would seem to be the case only if all noble things are also good, i.e., if the noble is simply a species of the good. Socrates

introduces the good and its opposites primarily, if not solely, to lead Laches to the conclusion that courage involves prudence as well as endurance. For folly clearly does cause harm and evil; Socrates presumes--correctly, as Laches' response ("it would not be just") shows--that Laches will be unwilling to regard a harmful or evil-working thing as noble. He quickly moves to the result that prudent endurance is courage in order to make Laches think about prudence in relation to courage. And we see Laches beginning to think--or at least to doubt, which is a precursor to thought--in his responses to Socrates' questions here. Laches quickly, i.e., unthinkingly, answers Socrates' first question: he finds no reason to doubt that endurance--which he has just asserted is courage--accompanied by prudence is noble and good. His answers become progressively more hesitant, until he is left with a conclusion about which he is very uneasy, for courage now seems to include prudence, and this seems to him to threaten the autonomy, not to say the existence, of courage. Yet Laches cannot simply reject this; after all, he has agreed to everything that Socrates has said. Laches is indeed left with something to think about.

Socrates, however, quickly moves on. Having introduced prudence, he returns from the soul itself to a consideration of circumstances in which courage might be said to arise. Apparently the situations which he mentions are divisible into two classes: Socrates asks Laches whether prudent endurance is prudent in respect of all things, both great and small (192e1f.). First, he asks Laches whether he would call courageous one who endured in spending money prudently, knowing that having spent he will possess more; by Zeus, replies Laches, he would not. What then, continues Socrates, about some doctor who, when his son or someone else had an inflammation of the lungs and begged to be given food or drink, did not bend but endured? Again Laches asserts that this is not courage. Apparently, these are not instances of courage in his view primarily because they are not great, not "serious" (cf. 182c3f.). And his denial that these situations involve courage seems correct: in the first example, endurance does not seem called for at all, while in the second, the doctor's art presumably prescribes abstinence from food or drink as the treatment for his patient's ailment; the doctor's practice of his art does not seem to require endurance. But the latter example, while perhaps not qualifying as an instance of courage, may well show us something about courage, or about the role of prudence in

courage. In a sense, the doctor may have more to endure against than the financier---especially if the one whom he is treating is his son. On the one hand, he must fear the consequences of giving in to his son's pleas, while on the other, his son's suffering must cause pain for him as well. Does not the doctor's "prudence," his *techne*, determine which of these the doctor must endure against?

Laches, however, denies that this kind of prudent remaining against pains is at all like courage. Socrates therefore returns to matters of war, and narrows the scope of courage, which he had previously widened. Moreover, the examples which he now offers are all double or comparative: in each case Laches is now to say which of two individuals is more courageous. They are supposedly attempting to determine in what respect prudent endurance is courage, but Socrates' examples seem to aim not at this, but rather at raising questions about the character of this prudence. Socrates first asks Laches about a man in war who is enduring and willing to fight, calculating prudently, and knowing that others will come to his aid, that he will be fighting against fewer and inferior men than his comrades, and that he holds stronger ground (193a3-6). Would Laches say that this one, "who endures with such prudence and preparation, is more courageous than one in the opposite camp who is willing to remain standing his ground and to endure?" (193a6-9). Laches feels that the latter is more courageous. But surely, Socrates replies, the endurance of the latter man is more foolish. Laches agrees. But should he? Socrates formulates his example in such a way as to suggest that he is speaking about men in the ranks. And the prudence which he describes is a calculating forethought with regard to self-interest, in this case a prudence which has determined that the risks of battle are minimized. Laches is surely correct in regarding this sort of prudence as reducing the need for courage, insofar as courage involves endurance, for although Socrates speaks of this man enduring, it would be more accurate to say that his prudence reduces the need for endurance, by indicating that there is little chance of injury or death and hence little to fear. Similarly, in Socrates' next examples, which involve three martial *technai*--- horsemanship, and the use of sling and bow--Socrates replaces prudence with *techne*, with that body of knowledge which is in the first instance concerned to tend to man's preservation and needs, in large part through provision against the vicissitudes of chance. These *technai* presumably reduce the risks of battle. But, in the first place, we

should note that Socrates asks Laches not whether the prudent or artful man simply is not courageous, but whether he is less courageous; to the extent that prudence and *techne* do not eliminate but only reduce risks, this man may still have need of endurance.

More fundamentally, however, it is questionable whether Laches should answer rather than question at this point, and in particular, whether he should agree with Socrates that the endurance of the man in the opposite camp is more foolish. For Socrates says nothing about the prudence--or lack thereof--of this man, and it is only when we notice this that the real import of Socrates' example becomes evident. Socrates says of this man only that he is willing to remain standing and to endure: does he do so sharing his counterpart's awareness of the disadvantageous position that he is in? And if so, why is he willing to remain? The obvious answer would seem to be that he is willing to because he is obeying his leader's command to do so. Socrates treats the two opponents as if they are on their own, as if their calculative prudence need consider only their own positions; if such is the case, the one willing to remain standing is perhaps more foolish. But we have already seen that for men in the ranks, obedience may take the place of prudence. The prudence of which Socrates is here speaking belongs much more to the general than to the hoplite. Indeed, this is the only way to make sense of Socrates' example. Socrates alerts us to this by speaking of the first man's prudence and preparation: who but a general could be responsible for such preparations as aid from allies, and advantages of terrain and number? He speaks of one willing to fight versus one willing to remain standing his ground,[10] tactics which again are determined by the general. That the prudence which Socrates describes is applicable more to the general than to the hoplite seems appropriate: he is, after all, attempting to make a general, who initially defined courage simply as hoplite courage, and then generalized that definiton to all cases of courage, think about prudence. Would we not expect a general, if anyone, to recognize that the situation which Socrates describes is not really applicable to a hoplite? Now, when we view Socrates' example in this way, it is apparent that no judgement can be made as to the relative courage of the opponents. For the generals' prudence is in the service not simply of their own interests, but of that of their respective cities, i.e., of victory. This determines what is fitting in a particular situation, for what is fitting is that which contributes to this end. Yet Socrates supplies no information about the latter man's

situation, other than that he is at a strategic disadvantage. This alone, however, is not sufficient for us to determine whether he ought to remain. Is he in this position due to his own lack of skill or his opponent's superior skill, or due to circumstances beyond his control, for example, that he is greatly outnumbered? And is it necessary for him to remain and do battle at such a disadvantage, or would it be more prudent to retreat--if retreat is possible? If it is necessary to remain, then Laches may indeed be correct in his assessment of the relative courage of the individuals involved in the example, but correct for the wrong reasons, since he has an inadequate understanding of prudence and its relation to courage and the battlefield. Socrates will later have to remind him of just this sort of prudence once again, when he admonishes Laches that it is surely fitting for the leader of the greatest things to partake in the greatest prudence (197e1f.). And we see that this sort of prudence does not necessarily erode endurance, but rather determines when such endurance is necessary.

One must consider the general's *techne* in relation to the martial arts which Socrates next cites as well. These arts may well reduce the risks to their practitioners, but they do not incorporate knowledge of how they are to be used; they are subordinate to the general's *techne* and to his prudence.[81] As such, Laches again may well be right to assert that those who do not possess these arts are more courageous, or require a greater amount of endurance, than those who do possess them, for the prudence which governs these arts is not that of the practitioner, but of the general. For one who must endure in a cavalry battle, participation is not dictated by whether he possesses the art, but again, by someone other than himself, and ultimately, by the laws of his city: though the possession of a *techne* may indeed reduce the need for endurance, the lack of such a *techne* does not lead to the conclusion that his endurance is foolish.

With his final example, Socrates leaves the battlefield and once again returns to the private. Here too, the case concerns one who acts with art, who is clever at well-diving, versus one who does not. Socrates' choice of words is apt: one who is clever (*deinos*) in such work does indeed reduce the terrors (*deinos*) of such things through the possession of a skill which enables him to avoid them. Laches agains sees no alternative but to claim that the one without art is more courageous; what else, he asks, could one say? Socrates replies that those who do such things without art presumably run the risk and are enduring

more foolishly; he seems, then, to indicate to Laches that those who act with art may nonetheless run risks. Again Laches agrees; and again, he should not agree so quickly. For once more Socrates has said nothing about the circumstances in which these men act. What is the reason behind this well-diving? To cool off, to display one's manliness, to save a drowning child? Without some consideration of this, it is impossible to determine who is prudent and who is foolish.[12] Indeed, no end can even be implied in this case, as it could above in regards to generalship; by moving to the private and remaining silent about ends, Socrates raises the question of the relation of prudence to the ends for which one acts and hence to determining what action is fitting in a given situation. The general's end, too, is determined for him by the city, in the service of which he practises his art; what of ends that are not set outside of oneself? Socrates here points to the relation of prudence to knowledge about ends, to knowledge of what ends one ought to pursue, that is, to knowledge of the good; to say nothing else, prudence itself necessarily raises these questions, for it aims at some end, and in the face of conflicting alternatives, evaluation of the alternatives is necessary to any consideration of means. Prudence, then, seems to be based upon or to include such knowledge; with his final example, Socrates moves towards consideration of these matters, matters which will occupy his discussion with Nicias.

Once again the discussion has, it seems, led to a state of *aporia*. The disagreement is no longer between the generals, but in what Laches has said--or rather, in what Laches and Socrates have said, for Socrates now speaks as if the argument which he previously attributed to Laches has led to a contradiction on both his and Laches' part. They are now asserting, contrary to what they agreed to before, that foolish endurance is courage. Socrates asks Laches whether foolish daring and endurance were revealed in what preceded to be shameful (or base, *aischros*, 193d1) and harmful; Laches affirms that they were. However, he should hesitate yet again; neither daring nor the base were mentioned before. Socrates replaces "evil-working" (192d2,5) with "base"; and he has previously spoken only of what is "not noble." Next, Socrates asks Laches whether in his opinion what they are saying is noble; Laches, again swearing by Zeus, declares that it is not. In response, Socrates makes use of the "musical theory" which Laches previously articulated: they are presumably not tuned to the Dorian, for their deeds are not in

concord with their speeches; while "someone" would likely say that they partake in courage in deed, he would not, if he had heard their discussion, say that they partake of it in speech. Laches assents to what appears to be a transformation of his theory: Socrates has turned it on its head. In Laches' articulation, deeds were the primary element, the "key-note" to which speeches should be harmonized: while most or all men are capable of speaking about courage, only those who possess courage in deed have the right to speak about it, and especially about their own courage. Socrates has now shown Laches that it is very difficult to possess courage in speech; it is this difficulty which results in the transformation of Laches' theory, for once the ability of most men to capture courage in speech is brought into question, deeds can no longer be the dominant element in his "harmonic modes." Furthermore, Socrates also seems to introduce a new harmonic mode here, one which follows from his reversal of Laches' musical theory. Laches spoke of several harmonic modes, but expressed his opinion that the only worthy one is the Dorian. Laches' first definiton of courage surely pointed to an example of a "Dorian" deed; and since speeches, according to him, must refer, indeed, defer to deeds, his first definition was presumably an example of Dorian speech. Speeches of necessity will reflect the practical world, the world of particular deeds, the domain in which true courage is found, in Laches' eyes. Socrates here claims that they are not harmonized to the Dorian; yet it is hard to see how the sort of speech which he is after can be considered Dorian, or be harmonized in the way that Laches spoke of. He speaks of "someone"--not a Dorian or Greek, or a Scythian, or a Persian--declaring that they partake of courage in deed; he has something different in mind than what Laches likely assumes--that he is referring to battlefield behavior, and probably to the very battle in which Laches witnessed Socrates' courage in deed. For what particular courageous deed can possibly reflect the speech which identifies courage <u>itself</u>, which encompasses all particular manifestations of courage? The only "deed" which can be harmonized with this speech is the "deed" which is aimed at discovering this speech--- the search in speech for courage itself.

The examination, then, is to become a search. one which will require not merely persistence, but endurance; what is there to endure against, what risks does such a search present? For Laches, at least, the risk that they will not find courage: if they should turn out not to know, Laches, given the transformation of his musical theory, will no longer be

able to make a claim to courage in deed; a lack of courage in speech *ipso facto* leads to a corresponding lack of courage in deed. Socrates has just said that "someone" would likely say that they partake of courage in deed; but does this not depend upon that someone knowing what courage is? And given that they have just engaged in attempting to show that they possess it in speech as a test of knowledge, would it not be necessary to test this one as well?

Socrates implies that there are other risks as well: if they do not search courageously, "courage herself" will ridicule them. This ridicule--as opposed to the ridicule of men--is apparently not something which one should endure against. Yet since their search is for "courage herself," they have no way of knowing whether an enduring search is a courageous search; they will only avoid such ridicule, it seems, if first, they find courage, and second, if courage indeed turns out to be endurance in whole or in part. Perhaps Socrates is subtly attempting to move Laches to fight against ridicule by remaining rather than retreating, even as he suggests that an enduring search will--perhaps--avoid such ridicule. But what if courage indeed involves prudence as well? The seekers are to obey only part of their speech; the part which led to their dilemma, which might "command" prudence, is apparently not to be obeyed. Can they avoid ridicule for this? Perhaps; for it seems that in a sense their search will be prudent. Is not Socrates' suggestion that they obey the part of their speech which commands endurance a prudent one? A search for courage must, like any search, be guided by some opinion; one does not search for what one knows, but one cannot search unless one has some idea of where to look. And though the seekers have not determined the precise relation of endurance to courage, they surely agree that endurance has something to do with courage; indeed, as Socrates suggests, it may turn out that endurance itself is often courage. To obey this opinion at least to the extent of continuing to endure in the search, then, does seem to be prudent after all. Still, there is no guarantee that their search will be successful; indeed the very need for endurance implies that the risk of failure is great. In this respect, endurance alone may well be courage; it seems difficult, if not impossible, to make any estimation of the chances of finding courage, and this problem reveals the limits of prudence. Is endurance called for most of all when such knowledge is absent? And is courage most fully expressed, does it stand on its own to the greatest extent, in situations

such as this?

Socrates has proposed a search which offers no guarantee of success, and moreover, a search which may result both in ridicule and a dissolution of the seekers' claim to courage in deed. But Laches can only be open to these fears, and hence can only show endurance in the search, to the extent that he realizes that he does not truly know what courage is; Socrates' present speech also subtly encourages Laches to recognize his own ignorance. Laches is indeed ready to continue, but not, it seems, for the reasons which Socrates has proposed. He is irritated, not at Socrates, but that he has been unable to say what he perceived in his mind; his love of victory has been aroused (194a6-b1). Laches' endurance is based in anger. He is unaccustomed to such speeches; somehow, courage has eluded him, so that he did not grasp it in speech. In his view, his speech has not been a test of his knowledge--in his opinion, he does perceive in his mind what courage is--but rather, has simply shown his lack of speaking ability; a deficiency which, he indicated earlier, is not all that important. It has surely now increased in importance; it is important that Laches now say what courage is; he realized at least this much, that if he cannot say what courage is, his claim to it in deed will be eroded. Apparently, the philosopher and the political man do not share the same kind of *aporia*.

Socrates picks up on Laches' description of his situation: since courage has fled, the good hunter must pursue and not give over. The examination has hitherto been dominated by considerations of battlefield courage; Laches is now to display the qualities of a hunter. Hunting is inherently offensive; insofar as Laches is concerned with defense (cf. 190e5), and in particular with defending his own claim to courage, we may wonder about what sort of hunter he will make. Rather than pursuing on their own, however, Socrates turns to Nicias. Why he does so at this point is unclear; it surely must seem abrupt to Laches. Moreover, Socrates once again seems to have altered the nature of the discussion in doing so. He proposed that they examine for knowledge of courage as a test of deliberative expertise, after agreeing to obey Lysimachus' enjoinder that he assume the latter's part and concerns in the deliberation; the examination has now apparently turned into a hunt. But perhaps Socrates turns to Nicias because he is still being guided by the terms of the deliberation: Laches, after all, has been tested and found wanting, according to the criteria which both he and Socrates established (190c4-7). If

so, Laches' continued participation seems uncalled for. Or does this too in some way serve the end of the deliberation for which Socrates is responsible?

Socrates inquires of Laches whether he wishes to call Nicias to the hunt; Nicias may in some respect be more resourceful than they. Successful hunting requires not only persistence--or endurance?--but resources as well. But Nicias is asked not only to join a hunt; if he has some power, Socrates says, he is to come to the aid of his friends, who are "storm-tossed in speech." By securely establishing in speech what he perceives in his mind about courage, Nicias is to deliver (or "set free," *ekluo*, 194c5) Socrates and Laches from perplexity. Socrates speaks as if he and his comrade are in some danger; will Nicias' attempt to rescue them involve running a risk on his part as well? Is the distinction between courage in one's own case and courage for the sake of another somehow germane to the discussion which follows?

194c-199e: Nicias On Courage

Nicias begins by addressing Socrates; he says nothing to Laches. Indeed, he acts as if not Laches, but Socrates, is responsible for the previous definition of courage. Nicias declares that Socrates' definition is not noble because he has not made use of a noble thing which Nicias has often heard him utter. Now, Nicias will explicitly indicate in a few moments that he does in fact regard Laches as the source of the preceding definition, when he claims that Laches has been revealed to be talking nonsense (195a8-b1). Why then does he not address his comments to Laches at this point? First of all, perhaps, because Nicias is reluctant to initiate a direct attack against Laches. But of equal importance, Nicias may well be once again attempting to avoid the pain of Socratic scrutiny. We are reminded of Nicias' feelings about this by the fact that he uses the same locution here--Socrates has "for a long time" seemed to him not to be giving a noble definition--that he used in describing what appeared likely to him to result from the deliberation--"for a long time" he had pretty much known that with Socrates present, the advisors would end up suffering examination by Socrates (188b6f.). We argued above (p. 49) that Nicias had likely been attempting "for a long time" to avoid undergoing such scrutiny. And although he claims to have thought what he now expresses for for some time, he has said nothing on his own initiative. Now, however, he has to speak. His

reference to Socrates' "noble saying" may constitute an attempt to "occupy the opponent's high ground": might not Nicias think that Socrates will not likely examine something which he himself has often said?

Nicias' reprisal of Socrates' noble saying is met with an oath on Socrates' part: "What you say, Nicias, is true indeed, by Zeus!" (194d3). Apparently, Nicias has often heard Socrates utter such a thing. But why does Socrates respond with an oath? He seems surprised by what Nicias says, but the reason for his surprise is not clear. It is hard to believe that Socrates has forgotten such considerations during the discussion with Laches. We do not very often see Socrates caught off his guard in the dialogues; does this constitute one occasion on which he has been? And, now that Nicias has brought it up, we too may wonder why Socrates hasn't made use of his noble saying.

What Socrates says, according to Nicias, is that each of us is good in those things in respect of which he is wise, and in the things in which he is unlearned, bad. From this Nicias draws the consequence that if the courageous man is good, he is wise. Nicias does not apply the second term of Socrates' noble saying. In Socrates' discussion with Laches, cowardice came to light as the opposite of courage; whether Nicias also thinks that the coward, if bad, is unlearned, is not clear.

Socrates proceeds--perhaps to Nicias' chagrin--to examine what Nicias has said. However, rather than doing so immediately, he first inquires of Laches whether he has heard what Nicias has asserted. This is the first of several times that Socrates attempts to ensure that Laches actively takes part in the discussion with Nicias; right from the start, he is for some reason desirous that Laches do so. This is also the first of several attempts by Socrates to mediate between the two generals. Laches does not understand what Nicias has said, but Socrates "seems to": the man is saying that courage is a certain wisdom. Nicias actually said that the courageous man is wise--if he is good; is Socrates' inference equivalent to, or does it follow from, what Nicias claimed? Laches is rather astonished by what Nicias is saying. "Wisdom!" he says; "of what sort, Socrates?" (194d10). Socrates directs his question to Nicias: "tell him what sort of wisdom courage would be, according to your account." Presumably it is not the *techne* of flute (*aulos*) or cithara, says Socrates. Socrates' question is rather odd, not to say absurd; why does he ask it? First of all, no doubt, to remind us that Nicias associates with a teacher of music,

the sophist Damon, whom Nicias regards as worthy for young men--and perhaps not only young men--to spend time with, "in whatever matters you wish" (180d1-3). Now, the *technai* appear to represent the paradigm of teachable knowledge, and Nicias has just asserted that the bad man's condition is due to a lack of learning; by asking Nicias about the arts of flute and cithara, Socrates raises the question how the wisdom of which Nicias speaks is acquired. But if Socrates was concerned only to raise this issue, why would he mention two *technai*, and in particular, two musical *technai*? Nicias himself elicits this from Socrates in saying that a man is good in those things regarding which he is wise. His statement implies that wisdom, like the *technai*, including the musical *technai*, is divisible according to its object, and divisible not only in a theoretical sense, but also in actual practise. The expert in the art of the flute, for example, need not be an expert in the art of the cithara in order to be competent in his art, and vice versa. Yet these men presumably share some "musical wisdom," some theory which constitutes the common basis of all musical *technai*, which makes them musical. By mentioning two musical arts, Socrates raises the question whether the wisdom of which Nicias speaks is simply divisible, whether the courageous man possesses a "certain wisdom" (194d9), as Nicias' claim seems to suggest. Or, alternatively, is Nicias saying that this wisdom is akin to "musical wisdom" in arguing that all good men, including courageous men, are wise; is such wisdom--the wisdom that makes one good--akin to the wisdom that makes one musical?

Nicias denies that the wisdom which he has in mind is either of these two *technai*; Socrates then asks him not one, but two questions: what is this knowledge, or of what is it? Laches now jumps in: let Nicias tell them what this knowledge is. In response, Nicias tells Laches what he says it is: "the knowledge of dreadful and confidence-inspiring things, both in war and all other matters" (194e11f.). Nicias has again expanded the domain of courage beyond war to all matters; this knowledge is distinguished not by situation but by something else. Nicias does not seem aware that Socrates has asked two questions; while claiming to say what this knowledge is, he speaks only of the objects of this knowledge--the dreadful and confidence-inspiring things.

Laches finds Nicias' definition to be strange, not to say absurd. Wisdom, he exclaims, is doubtless distinct from courage; again swearing by Zeus, he declares that Nicias is talking rubbish. Apparently he perceives in his mind not only what courage is, but

wisdom as well; and he seems to have entirely forgotten that his conversation with Socrates led to the possibility that knowledge of some sort is involved in courage. At the conclusion of that conversation, Laches was vexed that he was unable to express what he perceived in his mind; with Nicias' definition, Laches' vexation has been directed from attempting to express what he perceives to defending that perception against the speech of another; Laches has quickly returned from the hunt to the battlefield, and is already on the attack. Socrates now makes the first of several attempts to moderate Laches, to "slow him down": if Nicias is indeed talking rubbish, they should teach rather than revile him. But Nicias, much slower to attack than Laches, has now been aroused by the latter's frontal assault; he now counterattacks, claiming that Laches' reason for saying these things is the desire that Nicias too be revealed to be talking nonsense, since Laches was just revealed as such. Is it possible to engage in a hunt, an enterprise directed against a common prey, with men who appear to be at war with each other over a prey which each thinks that he already has in his grasp?

Laches agrees to one aspect of Nicias' claim: Nicias is indeed talking nonsense, and Laches is going to prove it. To do so, he refers to the *technai*, as did Socrates; for him, wisdom or knowledge is apparently primarily or solely the *technai*. Both doctors and farmers, Laches says, know the dreadful things in medicine and farming, respectively; and in general, all craftsmen know the dreadful and the confidence-inspiring things in their own arts. But such knowledge does not make them courageous. Laches names the dreadful things only in the case of the doctor; and, in regards to doctor and farmer, he speaks only of the dreadful things. What the confidence-inspiring things are is apparently not as evident as what the dreadful things are; or, perhaps they are not as relevant to the application of courage.

Once Laches "proves" that Nicias is talking nonsense, Socrates again intervenes. He asks what in Nicias' opinion Laches is saying, for he seems to be saying something. Presumably he seems to Socrates to be saying something; yet rather than explicating what Laches is saying himself, he asks Nicias to. Socrates' action here begins to make clear why he arranged things such that Laches remained a participant in the discussion. Nicias initiated his attempt to define courage by making reference to what he had often heard Socrates say, by identifying himself with Socrates' views. By keeping Laches involved in

the discussion, Socrates prevents Nicias from simply relying on what he has heard, for he can count upon Laches to challenge what Nicias says, to force Nicias to argue for his claims. Hence, Socrates here attempts to force Nicias to address Laches' objections, to engage in genuine dialogue. What, then, does Laches appear to be saying, in Socrates' view? In all likelihood, that Laches has said something about the character of technical or practical knowledge. The knowledge that a *techne* constitutes is guided by, and aims at, a particular end, and this end defines the good for the practitioner as practitioner; as such, it would seem to determine what is dreadful for him as well. Nicias agrees that Laches is saying "something"; he does not answer Socrates' question as to what that "something" is, but instead asserts that Laches is not saying something true. According to Nicias, Laches thinks that doctors know something more about the sick than what is healthy and diseased. But "doubtless" they know only this; they do not know whether it is dreadful for someone to be healthy rather than sick. Or, Nicias asks, does Laches think that it is better for many not to get up from an illness than to get up, or that it is better for all to live and not better for many to die? Laches replies that this at least he does think; so, Nicias continues, does he think that the same things are dreadful for those for whom it is profitable to die as for those for whom it is profitable to live? No, says Laches. Then, Nicias concludes, does he give the knowing of this to doctors or any other craftsman, besides the knower of dreadful and not dreadful things, whom Nicias calls courageous?

Nicias does not, then, deny that the craftsman is guided by an end dictated by his *techne*; rather, he denies that the things which they regard as dreadful in light of that end are truly or necessarily dreadful. Doctors, for example, know what is healthy and diseased, but not whether it is dreadful for a particular patient to be healthy or sick. Now, health has been repeatedly mentioned in the dialogue as the paradigm of something about which all men are knowing; men are able to recognize when their bodies are healthy and unhealthy, and most men surely think they know that health is a good thing, and disease a bad thing. Nicias denies that men's opinions about these things have any grasp whatever of their true nature--indeed, he appears to claim that the opposite is more nearly the case, that it is often not disease, but health, that is dreadful. At any rate, why Nicias believes that most men know little or nothing about these things unclear. But what follows is that most men, because they lack this knowledge, lack courage as well. And given this

somewhat surprising claim, it would seem incumbent on Nicias to explain what, in his view, this knowledge is, and what it is of. These things are not immediately apparent from what he says. Both health and disease may be dreadful things. The dreadful, then, appears to be changeable, and its variability seems to be due, from what Nicias says, to the fact that it is dependent upon and determined by something outside of itself. Nicias asserts that the same things are not dreadful for all men, but vary according to whether it is profitable for a man to live or to die; particular things partake of the dreadful in light of something else. It appears, then, that the courageous man is not simply knowing about dreadful and confidence-inspiring things, but that this knowledge depends upon his possessing some other knowledge. Nicias confirms this in asking Laches whether he would give knowledge of whether it is profitable to live or to die to the doctor or any other craftsman besides the knower of dreadful and not-dreadful things. On the surface at least, one might take Nicias to be speaking of knowledge of what is truly in a man's interest, of knowledge of the good. But whether this is the knowledge specific to the courageous man is unclear.

Other questions about the courageous man's knowledge are raised by Nicias' statements as well. Nicias claims that no <u>other</u> craftsman besides the courageous man will know these things; this seems to imply that this knowledge constitutes a *techne*. Is this knowledge, like the *technai*, essentially productive? Nicias' speech suggests that it is, indeed, that it is the thing most needful if the *technai* in general are to be of any value to men. For his argument implies that the *technai* are at best misguided, and more likely quite harmful, in the absence of this knowledge. If medicine, for example, is to truly benefit men, either doctor or patient must possess this knowledge--if, that is, the doctor can be knowing about when it is dreadful for others to be healthy or ill. If he can, another possibility arises: is the knowledge specific to the courageous man at the same time a *techne* whose business it is to rule the *technai*?

Such questions as these are not occasioned for Laches by what his counterpart has said. He states, in response to Socrates' query, that he perceives what Nicias is saying: he is calling diviners courageous; who else will know whether it is better to live or to die? Nicias' argument is so far removed from most men's opinions about these things that it does not even occur to Laches that Nicias is questioning those opinions. The only thing that he can conceive of is that Nicias is making the ridiculous assertion that the

courageous man is one who is capable of knowing what the future holds in store for a man.[83] Does Nicias, then, he exclaims sarcastically, call himself a diviner? Laches has in fact not perceived what Nicias is saying, as Nicias' somewhat astonished reply indicates. The knowledge of which he is speaking belongs not to diviners, Nicias counters, but "much more to him whom I say, best one" (195e8). Nicias does not flatly deny that the diviner is in some way relevant to the knowledge which he has in mind--this knowledge belongs "much more" to the courageous man--but the diviner as diviner is not courageous. His business is to know only the signs of the things that will be--whether death or illness or loss of property will come to someone, or victory or defeat either in war or some other competition; he does not know whether it is better for someone to suffer or not suffer these things. Again, Nicias seems to have some comprehensive knowledge of good and evil in mind. And again the question arises, in light of what are the things which Nicias mentions dreadful or confidence-inspiring? Nicias has claimed, for example, that illness is not dreadful when death is profitable for a man; are all of these things, too, determined to be better suffered or avoided according to what will profit a man in a given situation? If so, Nicias has a rather unusual view of profit: on the surface at least, death, or defeat in war, do not appear to be very profitable. What then does Nicias mean by the profitable? And is the dreadful simply what is unprofitable, and the confidence-inspiring what will bring one profit?

Laches, too, is uncertain as to what Nicias means; but he is no longer concerned, if he ever was, to try to find out. Nicias, he says, does not make clear that diviner or doctor or anyone else is the man whom he says to be courageous, unless it is some god; he is unwilling to agree in a well-born manner that he speaks nonsense, but attempts to conceal his own perplexity through speech--which, Laches notes sarcastically, is more appropriate to a law-court than an association such as theirs (196a5-b7). One might well reply to Laches that accusatory speeches are also more suitable to the law-courts. Laches speaks as if this is a friendly meeting of gentlemen whose participants ought to behave in a well-born manner; his deeds surely contradict this speech. Laches is irritated that Nicias refuses to admit his perplexity, that is, that he refuses to admit that Laches' criticisms have proved that he is speaking nonsense; Nicias stubbornly refuses to acknowledge Laches' victory. But this has certainly not yet been made evident; Laches is much too

quick in assuming that it has. His quickness is surely a result of the fact that what Nicias has said may imply that a god is courageous while denying that Laches is. Laches, much more than Nicias, is acting as if he is in court; he is primarily concerned to defend his understanding, and hence his claim, to courage.

Socrates once again attempts to moderate Laches' quickness. He suggests that Nicias is perhaps not saying these things simply for the sake of a speech; they must inquire further; if Nicias turns out to be saying something, they will accede to it, and if not, they will teach him. Laches, however, has little reason to make the attempt to understand Nicias: if Nicias should indeed turn out to be saying something, Laches will not only suffer a defeat in this contest in speech, but may also lose his claim to courage. Laches might be willing to continue, if he thought that he would be able to induce Nicias to admit defeat; but Laches has tried to do this and has failed, and the frustration evident in his charge that Nicias has "turned this way and that" to evade Laches' arguments indicates that he has run out of resources. Having been quick to attack, Laches is now quick to retreat. He has, he says, inquired of Nicias sufficiently; Socrates may continue if he wishes. Socrates must now encourage Laches, must induce him to endure in the pursuit of courage, as he earlier agreed to do. He proposes an alliance between himself and Laches: having shared a retreat in deed, on the battlefield, they will now share an advance in speech. This is sufficient to procuring Laches' continued participation. Laches is no longer on his own, but is now allied with a man who has shown himself to be much more adept at speech than he. But it appears that Socrates has now been forced to retreat a ways from his attempt to encourage the generals to converse with each other; he saves his mediation between them only by forming an alliance with Laches in which he takes over Laches' side of the discussion.

Socrates begins by reprising what Nicias has said thus far. Judging from what he asks Nicias, it appears that he is about to again question Nicias concerning the nature of the knowledge that Nicias has been calling courage. Instead, he abruptly turns to an entirely different matter, which he introduces by invoking a proverb. It seems to him, Socrates says, that one who argues as Nicias does must either deny that any wild animal possesses courage, or else concede that "some wild animal" is so wise that it knows things that few human beings know, because of their being hard to know. But one who says that

courage is what Nicias says must of necessity affirm that lion, deer, bull, and monkey are by nature alike as regards courage. Socrates' new line of attack delights Laches; he is now moved to swear by all the gods. Having been "fortified" by Socrates, his natural boldness again takes over; again he quickly attacks. Does Nicias, he asks, wish to make the ridiculous assertion that these animals are wiser than "we," or does he dare to contradict "all of us" and say that they are not courageous? Nicias replies to Laches that he does not call wild animals--or anything else--that does not fear dreadful things on account of ignorance courageous, but fearless and stupid. Or does Laches think that he, Nicias, would call children courageous, who are afraid of nothing on account of ignorance? The fearless and the courageous are in his view not the same thing; very few have a share in courage and forethought, whereas very many--among men, women, children, and wild beasts--share in boldness and daring and fearlessness together with lack of forethought. What Laches--and the many--call courageous, he calls bold, while he calls courageous the prudent ones.

Socrates asks Nicias about these things in order to gain further clarification of Nicias' conception of courage. The response which they elicit from Nicias seems to suggest that he is speaking of a courage that is simply knowledge. Nicias has just claimed that most men lack courage because they lack knowledge, because they are ignorant; now he appears to be claiming, contrary to common sense, that they lack courage because they lack fear. The two claims are connected: lack of fear seems to be a result of ignorance. Hence, Nicias asserts that wild animals do not fear dreadful things on account of ignorance; and children too, are afraid of nothing for the same reason. In a sense, Nicias is surely correct: children, and especially very young children, do indeed seem to be ignorant of the sorts of things which can harm them, and hence are prone to actions which they would fear to do were they aware of these things. But is it true that children fear nothing? In a sense this too may be true, but certainly not in the way that Nicias means it to be taken. Children do sometimes fear when there is nothing to fear; one need only think of their fear of darkness, or of strangers. And these fears are also due to ignorance concerning things which pose the threat of harm. Not only lack of fear, but fear as well, may be due to ignorance; Nicias, however, seems to be more concerned with the former. And both point to the instinctual nature of fear, to the fact that humans and

animals alike experience a natural concern for preservation which is prior to the sort of knowledge that Nicias is talking about. Nicias asserts that wild animals do not fear on account of ignorance. But it is not their ignorance which is responsible for their fearlessness, as we see when we consider the speech which has evoked this statement from Nicias. In that speech, Socrates appears to be asking Nicias about animals which, according to Laches, all men agree are courageous: one who argues as Nicias does, says Socrates, must deny that any wild animal is courageous or else assert than lion, leopard, or boar knows things that few among humans know. But Socrates adds this statement: ". . . he who posits courage as what you posit must of necessity assert that lion and deer and bull and monkey are by nature alike as regards courage" (196e7-9). If ignorance causes fearlessness, then how is Nicias to account for the deer, an animal so fearful by nature that men often look to it in describing other men as cowardly, as "deer-hearted"?[84] Both lion and deer, of course, are ignorant in the way that Nicias says, and insofar as courage involves knowledge they are indeed by nature alike as regards courage. But it is not ignorance, but nature, which is responsible for the fearlessness of the lion and the fearfulness of the deer, and in this respect they are not by nature alike as regards courage; Socrates is pointing to the fact that these animals manifest not courage itself, but something that courage involves, and that it involves "by nature" (cf. 192b9f.).

Nicias' argument seems to neglect this aspect of courage: it does not adequately account for the fact that human beings experience fear by nature, that the concerns of the body, the desire to preserve oneself, is an abiding concern for most if not all human beings, but that, faced with situations which pose threats to one's preservation, they are to varying extents able to overcome their fears. From what Nicias says, one would have to conclude that this does not fall within the range of possible human actions: men and women either fear when they should, and hence are courageous, or they do not fear when they should, and hence are bold. There seem to be no cases of men who fear when they should not,[85] nor does Nicias' speech allow for the possibility that men are somehow able to act in spite of their fears. Laches--and Socrates--called this power endurance; Nicias here appears to be denying that such a power exists. Men who act in the face of dreadful things do so because they do not fear, because they lack forethought. Whereas Nicias began by speaking of the ignorance of beasts and children, he now speaks not of

ignorance, but of lack of forethought. Now, it would seem to be the case that children and beasts do lack forethought on account of their ignorance: since they are not aware of the threats posed by particular situations, they are unable to be forethoughtful about such situations. But Nicias is surely not claiming that such is the case with most men and women as well; he surely cannot believe that most men and women share the ignorance of children and beasts about the sorts of things which can do them harm. The fearlessness of men and women, then, must be due simply to their lack of forethought, to their failure to foresee the dangers posed by particular situations. Yet can this be the whole story? Nicias has asserted that what defines the courageous man is a certain wisdom; why does he not now say that men lack courage because they lack the knowledge of which he spoke earlier--indeed, why does he move from speaking of ignorance to speaking of lack of forethought? Or is this knowledge nothing more than forethought? What Nicias said about divination seems to suggest that it is not: according to him, the diviner, the forethoughtful man par excellence, can only tell whether death, illness, etc.--things which certainly inspire fear in most men--will come to a man; he cannot say whether these things are better suffered or avoided, i.e., whether they are dreadful or not dreadful. Nicias has as yet not adequately answered either of Socrates' questions: what this knowledge is, and of what, is still unclear.

He has, however, confirmed at least one thing for Laches. The man who Nicias says is courageous is Nicias, and Nicias alone: consequently, it turns out that Laches is not courageous, because Nicias' speech denies that the opinions of most men about the courageous are correct. Laches' courage is truly dependent upon the city; the honor which attends courage is not only worthy for its own sake, but of equal importance, because it determines whether one is courageous. That Laches fails to separate these things is clearly indicated by his attack on Nicias here: he claims that Nicias is attempting to "adorn himself in speech" by depriving all others of the honor which comes to the courageous. He seems to mean that Nicias is attempting to reserve the honor which courage brings for himself alone by depriving all others of it. Yet Nicias has just claimed that the many's view of courage is wrong; if Nicias believes himself to be courageous, he cannot think that his courage will bring him the honor of the many, for the many do not agree with his view of courage. Nicias is somehow separated from the opinions of the

many in a way that Laches is not. He indicates as much in his reply to Laches: he is willing to grant that Laches is wise, if he is courageous; he does not wish, he implies, to possess all the honor for himself. Men like Laches and Lamachus--the war-spirit incarnate, the general who, of the three who were to lead the ill-starred Sicilian expedition, favoured an immediate, frontal attack[16]--are those whom the many honor with the title courage. Nicias separates himself from what he views as boldness, and from the honor which such boldness brings. But when we recall Nicias' great concern, in his evaluation of the learnable, with a nobility or honor that did not require the sacrifice of security, we may begin to suspect that Nicias has no choice but to do so, that he is unable to behave "honorably" or in a way that will bring him this kind of honor.

The implication of Nicias' remark is not lost on Laches; Nicias has spoken "fighting words," to which Laches is ready to respond in kind. Again Socrates moderates Laches. Laches should not speak, for he has not noticed, according to Socrates, that Nicias has received this wisdom from their comrade Damon, and Damon associates with Prodicus, who seems to distinguish such terms the most nobly of the sophists. Socrates in effect says that it is fitting that Laches refrain from abusing Nicias in the manner of an Aixonean, of speaking in character, for Nicias' speech has not been in character; it has not revealed the "true Nicias." Nicias' argument is in some way not his own, but is second- or perhaps even third-hand wisdom. Laches has just shown that he fundamentally relies upon the opinions of the city. Although Nicias stands apart from these, he too does not stand alone, but relies upon the wisdom of the sophists; Nicias has been "sophisticated."

If Socrates intends his explanation of the source of Nicias' argument to moderate Laches, it has just the opposite effect; how likely is it that Laches will seriously consider anything said to come from a sophist? It is fitting, Laches exclaims, for a sophist to contrive such subtleties, rather than a man whom the city deems worthy to be its leader. Socrates' mention of the sophists brings out the profound differences between the two generals: Laches now explicitly identifies himself with the city, and Nicias is explicitly identified with the sophists. Socrates has apparently been attempting throughout the conversation with Nicias to mediate between the generals; their exchanges here serve notice that his attempt to mediate has failed; each general regards the other and the things with with he is identified with active hostility. Moreover, Socrates' reply to Laches'

denunciation of the sophists--"it is surely fitting, blessed man, for the leader of the greatest things to partake in the greatest prudence" (197e1f.)--again indicates that he has been particularly concerned to open Laches to the possibility that courage involves prudence. This accounts for why Socrates has just attempted to moderate Laches by mentioning what has served only to inflame him: the sophists. If Laches is to be truly moderated, he must become more open to knowledge: it is this openness itself which will moderate him. It is not enough that Laches is willing to listen to a man because he possesses noble deeds, to a man like Socrates; he must be willing to at least listen to a man simply because he may possess noble speeches (cf. 197d3-5), to a man like Nicias, or even Damon. That Socrates' attempt to moderate Laches has failed is now shown in deed as well. Socrates says that in his opinion it is still worthwhile to examine Nicias' argument. In response, Laches once more attempts to "break the ranks" with the curt rejoinder that Socrates can examine Nicias himself. The last time that Laches tried to do this, Socrates induced him to stay in order simply by stating that nothing prevented Socrates from continuing to inquire, since the inquiry would be a common one; Laches accepted the proposal of an alliance in speech of his own accord. Now, however, Socrates says that he will not let Laches go, and he orders Laches to endure; Laches responds "let it be so, if it seems that it must" (197e9), i.e., if it seems so to Socrates. Laches is prevented from breaking the ranks only through obedience to the command of another, by accepting without question that commander's claim that this is required. He will not actively intervene again in the conversation until the end of the dialogue.

Once Laches has been kept in order, Socrates continues. But there now seems to have been a slight change in what is to be examined. Whereas in response to Laches' first charge that Nicias was simply employing deceptive speech, Socrates proposed that they continue to inquire of Nicias as to what he "perceives in his mind" about courage (196c2), he now suggests that they continue by examining what Nicias looks to (*blepo*, 197e3) when he assigns the name courage. The two examinations do not appear to be identical; the latter seems to point towards the question how Nicias identifies manifestations of courage. According to him, the many look to boldness, and presumably to the result of boldness, to the bold man's deeds, when they assign the name courage. Nicias however, has asserted that not this boldness, but wisdom, is courage. What then does he look to

when he assigns the name courage, which of all the virtues appears to be most fully manifested by deeds? How does Nicias tell that a man possesses the wisdom that is courage? What Nicias has said seems to confine displays of courage to speech alone.

Socrates begins by asking Nicias whether at the beginning of the argument they were examining courage by examining it as a part of virtue. Nicias affirms that they were. Then when Nicias gave his answer, Socrates continues, did he too take it as a portion, there being other parts as well, which all together are called virtue? Again Nicias agrees. And does Nicias say that these things are what Socrates says? Socrates calls them, in addition to courage, moderation and justice "and some other such things" (198a8-9). To this too Nicias emphatically agrees. One might ask whether he should, since Socrates says nothing about which other parts he has in mind. In particular, he does not mention anything that has to do with knowing. Why doesn't Nicias object to this? He has, after all, been arguing that courage is wisdom. Perhaps Nicias agrees to what Socrates says because he has argued only that courage is a "certain" wisdom. But then what is the status of other kinds of wisdom in regards to virtue? Nicias' reprisal of Socrates' "noble saying" provides a possible answer: a man is good in those things in respect of which he is wise; perhaps all of the virtues are "certain wisdoms." Why then, we might ask, not simply say that virtue is wisdom, rather than courage, moderation, justice, etc.? If Nicias would indeed assert that all of the virtues are kinds of wisdom, what is it that determines the particular virtues? Does such a division arise from virtue itself, or from that to which virtue is connected, the soul (which again, has not been considered to this point), or is it simply arbitrary?

Socrates next seeks agreement concerning the dreadful and confidence-inspiring things, in order that Nicias does not believe some things, while he and Laches believe others. Socrates and Laches, according to Socrates, believe that the things that cause fear are dreadful, and those that do not are confidence-inspiring; and they say that fear is caused not by past or present but future evils; for fear is the expectation of future evil. Socrates turns to Laches for endorsement of this position; Laches is in decided agreement. Their position, then, says Socrates, is that future evils are dreadful, and future non-evils or goods are confidence-inspiring. Is this what Nicias says? Nicias replies that it is. And it is knowledge of these things that Nicias calls courage? "Exactly,"

he replies.

Socrates asks about these things because to this point, they have been anything but clear. On the one hand, Nicias has spoken in a way which suggested that the dreadful things do not necessarily cause fear, and conversely, that things which at least normally cause fear are not necessarily dreadful. He has spoken of an illness that is not dreadful, of a death that is profitable, and he implied that in such cases, health and life are properly regarded as dreadful things. Yet on the other hand, his separation of courage and boldness implied that the difference between the two is centered upon fear; if the courgeous man possesses the knowledge which, according to Nicias, is specific to him, then it would seem that his fear is a result of his knowledge of the dreadful things, that there is a connection between fear and the dreadful things. Socrates asks Nicias about these things in order to determine the relation between the dreadful things and fear, and consequently, to determine the kind of knowledge that Nicias has in mind. He begins by delimiting the dreadful things as those which cause fear; all things which do not cause fear are confidence-inspiring. He then defines fear as the expectation of future evils, and then concludes from these premises that future evils are the dreadful things. Nicias agrees to all of this, and his agreement removes much of the confusion which surrounded his earlier claims. For Socrates appears to commit a logical error in making this argument: the most that follows from his premises is that the dreadful things are future evils; his conclusion that future evils, i.e., all future evils, are dreadful, does not follow--unless all future evils cause fear. Nicias' initial comments about the knowledge that is courage suggested that this might not be the case, but his decided agreement to what Socrates says here indicates that for him, all future evils are dreadful, precisely because he regards what causes him fear as evil. From being a knowledge of what is truly dreadful and confidence-inspiring, which leaves open the possibility that a man might fear what is confidence-inspiring, and not fear what is dreadful, the courageous man's knowledge now appears to be knowledge of future evils, of fearful things--to be forethought.

Socrates' curious division of evils into past, present, and future, also points towards this conclusion. He asserts, and Nicias agrees, that fear is caused only by future evils, and this is in accord with what Nicias earlier argued---that fear is caused by forethought. Now, in the most immediate sense, this may be the case; but are not at least

past evils (and present evils, insofar as they become part of our experience) also involved in fear? Do not past evils "cause" fear in the sense that our past experience--both what we have observed, and what we have suffered ourselves--causes us to fear the recurrence of such evils in the future? And do not these "fears" cause us to be forethoughtful about their recurrence in the future? We might have thought, from Nicias' earlier assertions, that this forethought is based upon a knowledge of what is "truly" dreadful and confidence-inspiring; we now have good reason to think that Nicias' "forethought," too, is caused simply by past and present evils, and moreover, by Nicias' own fearfulness, his preoccupation with his own fears.

With these issues agreed upon, Socrates turns at last to the question of knowledge itself, again to see whether the discussants share the same opinion about it. First he outlines a general proposition concerning its character, and then illustrates it with three examples. In regards to things of which there is knowledge, he says that there is not one knowledge about that which has come into being, which knows in what way it has come into being, and another about what is coming into being, and yet another about that which will come into being; rather, the same knowledge is concerned with all of these things. In regards to the healthy, medicine oversees all of these things; so too, in the case of farming and generalship. Socrates apears to be claiming that a body of knowledge is unified through a particular subject-matter, but that this knowledge is also susceptible of division on the basis of temporality. Closer analysis, however, reveals that he is not saying this at all. In regards to the healthy, he says that medicine "oversees the things that are coming into being and those that have come into being and those that will come into being, as to how they will come into being" (198d7f.). Medical knowledge is one, and is unchanging, because it is knowledge of something which does not change, of the way in which health comes into being. And Socrates indicates as much when, after he has obtained Nicias' agreement as to the character of knowledge, he begins to speak of things in "all conditions" as well as those that have come into being, are coming into being, and will come into being (cf. 199b6f. with 199b10-c1). What is Socrates' point in making this argument? The conversation between Nicias and Laches led from consideration of doctors and farmers to diviners; Socrates employs the same examples here, and adds a fourth, generalship. And rather than speaking of divination in relation to medicine or

farming, he chooses to speak of it in relation to--and to subordinate it to--generalship. We are surely meant to be reminded by this of the event for which Nicias is most remembered: his leadership of the disastrous Sicilian expedition, and specifically, his role in the grim denouement of that campaign, which was due in large part, if not entirely, to Nicias' subordination of generalship to divination.[17] Socrates' mention of these things serves notice that divination does indeed play a part in the knowledge that Nicias is calling courage; Nicias endeavors to use divination to supplement, or rather to perfect, his forethought, to overcome the uncertainty of the future. Socrates' statements here are intended to point out to us, if not to Nicias, that forethought for the future, for things that will come into being, is possible, to the extent that it is possible, only when based in knowledge of things which do not change. He says to Nicias that "doubtless" he and Laches would bear witness that generalship has forethought in the noblest manner both in other respects and concerning what is going to be, and hence it thinks that it must not serve but rule divination. Throughout this speech Socrates has spoken of what will come into being (*genesomai*, 195d5, d7, e1, 199a1); only here does he speak of what is going to be (*mellon esesthai*, 198e4). When Nicias described the diviner's specific knowledge, he spoke of knowing the signs of what will be (*esesthai*, 195e9). Socrates is here asserting that the general has nobler forethought than the diviner about what is going to be because he, and not the diviner, possesses knowledge of what will be, of what does not change. And the general also possesses nobler forethought "in other respects," concerning what is not necessary but contingent: the general is more capable of forethought in regards to future events both because of what he knows and because he can act on the basis of this knowledge to determine what will come in the future. Such forethought, however, can only minimize the uncertainties of the future; it cannot eliminate them. And insofar as this is the case, the general's art calls for the ability to act in the face of an uncertain future, of what is beyond his control. What Nicias wants is a knowledge that will give him at least some measure of control over what the future will bring him. Nicias has ignored Laches' definition precisely because he attempts to substitute such knowledge for what Laches called endurance.

Socrates does not turn to Nicias to see whether he agrees with all of Socrates' assertions, and Nicias says nothing about his ordering of general and diviner; instead,

Socrates asks Nicias whether he agrees to the general argument that the same knowledge understands the things that will be (*esomenon*, 199a7)--not "that will come into being"--and that are coming into being and that have come into being. Nicias professes that this is his opinion. With all of these things clarified, Socrates turns at last to Nicias' argument itself. He first reprises Nicias' claim; then, the agreement that dreadful and confidence-inspiring things are future goods and evils; finally, the agreement about the character of knowledge. Why Socrates claims, and Nicias agrees, that the confidence-inspiring things are simply future goods, when they earlier agreed that these things are future goods and "non-evils," is not clear; but it seems to emphasize that Nicias is above all concerned to avoid evil things, and hence seems to view what is not-evil as good in itself. Nicias says nothing about this change, nor about Socrates' abrupt introduction of "things in all conditions" in addition to past, present, and future things. He is much more concerned about where the conversation is leading. For the first time since Socrates took over the inquiry from Laches, Nicias' response betrays a trace of doubt. Socrates next asserts that Nicias has spoken only of a part of courage--"about a third"--although he was asked about the whole of courage. And now their discussion seems to point to the conclusion that the courage of which Nicias has spoken is really knowledge not just of dreadful and confidence-inspiring things, but pretty much all goods and evils, and in all conditions. Nicias agrees to these changes as well. Well then, says Socrates, now addressing Nicias as "*daimonic* one,"[83] would one who knew how all good and evil things, in all ways, come into being and will come into being and have come into being lack anything of virtue? And, he adds, does Nicias think that this one would be in need of moderation or justice and piety, to whom alone it belongs to know how to associate correctly with both gods and human beings, and through this to be on his guard for the dreadful things, and those that are not, and to provide himself with the good things? Nicias replies that Socrates is in his opinion saying something. Indeed he is; with these statements, Socrates at last makes clear the kind of knowledge that Nicias has been calling courage. The knowledge that ultimately determines what is dreadful and confidence-inspiring is knowledge of correct association with the gods. Nicias has spoken in such a way as to suggest that the things which men ordinarily regard as dreadful are not simply such, but vary according to some standard outside of themselves. What that standard is has now been revealed: Nicias has

in mind what is perhaps the ultimate of private concerns, the fate of his soul. The things that most people regard as dreadful--those things which cause them loss, and above all, injury and death--are in Nicias' view variable as to their dreadfulness after all, but they are variable in light of nothing other than an overriding concern for the ultimate in preservation: how one will fare in the life after. Nicias pointed to this concern when he said that Socrates' examinations make one more forethoughtful for the life after by showing one what is not noble about one's way of life; and he had precisely this concern in mind when he spoke of a "profitable death." Nicias' argument reflects his hope that the gods reward what is noble, or the fear that they punish what is not noble; to avoid death when it is not noble to avoid it is to show lack of forethought for the afterlife; it is to regard as dreadful what is not. In this, Nicias may share the opinion of his city, for the city seems to rely at least in part on this belief as a support for the courage of its citizens; he surely does not share his city's opinion of what is noble and base, just and unjust--how could a man, and moreover a prominent general, who shared these opinions declare, as Nicias did, that defeat in war is not necessarily a dreadful thing? Rather, Nicias' opinions about these things are derived from a source other than the city, from the sophists--and, according to Nicias, from Socrates as well. His fearfulness, then, separates him from the city, and at the same time, opens him to the sophists. Yet the opinions which he receives from the sophists are "second-hand wisdom"; as Socrates implied above, Nicias has not spoken "in character," for he does not understand the wisdom that he has received from these men, he has not truly made it his own. This, too, seems due to his fearfulness: to say nothing else, it would seem that the attempt to gain knowledge of the dreadful things requires that one address the question of the nature of death, which is the very source of Nicias' fears.

In a sense, then, the dreadful things do turn out to be not simply equivalent to the things that cause fear--illness, death, etc., may not be dreadful--but in a more fundamental sense, the dreadful is what causes fear, for Nicias' greatest, his overriding fear, is the fear of death and the uncertainty surrounding it, the possibility that it is the destruction of the soul. It is this fear which opens Nicias to the possibility, the <u>hope</u> that death is not what it appears to be, and hence that one can be forethoughtful about the after life as well as this life. Yet at the same time, his fearfulness appears to leave him unable to act in

accordance with this presumed knowledge. Nicias wishes to overcome his fears through this knowledge, this "super-forethought"; it is not this knowledge, however, but that aspect which Nicias neglects, and yet with which he is so preoccupied, the animal part of his being, that is responsible for these fears, and hence, which calls for endurance if those fears are to be overcome. Nicias' fears for his soul cannot be counted upon to override his fears for his body, for what is the source of all his fears. Nicias has provided us with an illustration of this "in deed." He spoke of Socrates' characteristic testing as something from which one should not flee, as "no bad thing." Indeed, Nicias should regard it as a very good thing, for in pointing at what is not noble about a man's way of life, Socrates makes one forethoughtful, and forethought, according to Nicias, is the thing most needful if one is to be courageous. Yet Nicias has been concerned almost from the beginning to avoid it, for with the forethought which it provides come pain and humiliation as well. According to Nicias' speech, it seems that these things should not be avoided, but should be met with confidence, should be regarded as confidence-inspiring; his deeds show that he treats them as dreadful, that they in fact inspire fear, a fear which Nicias seems unable to face. Hence, even should Nicias be confident that he possessed such knowledge, it is, we suspect, unlikely that he would be able to act in accordance with what was "confidence-inspiring" in his head, but "dreadful" in his heart, precisely because he lacks that ability to endure against his fears, because he seeks to replace endurance with this knowledge. Moreover, when Nicias is uncertain about his possession of this knowledge,[89] we have reason to believe that he simply capitulates to his animal fears, that he acts according to forethought for this life, rather than the life after; in such cases, his "courage" likely consists in making use of his own forethought and that which he thinks comes from the diviners in order to avoid those things which are commonly regarded as dreadful, and to act only when there is no prospect of such things, when Nicias is confident that no harm will result from acting.

Socrates' emphasis throughout his speech of becoming, and especially of how good things come into being, is intended to make us aware of the problems which Nicias' fearfulness and consequent separation from the city lead to in his account of the knowledge that is courage. Nicias is concerned solely with how good and bad things come into being, with what good and bad things will come to <u>him</u>.[90] When Socrates

introduced the issue of knowledge, he spoke of knowledge that is concerned with bringing things into being, that is, of *techne*; and he claimed that his argument applied to all things of which there is knowledge. There, however, he made no mention of good or evil; these things were brought up only when he returned to the knowledge said by Nicias to be courage. What Nicias seems to desire is a *techne* of the good things, one that, like medicine, which is concerned with producing healthy things and avoiding diseased things, is concerned with producing good things and avoiding evil things. And Nicias has suggested that the doctor--and presumably the general, and all who practise the *technai*--do not know whether the ends which they pursue are truly good or evil. By separating his discussion of the knowledge of good and evil things from his discussion of the character of productive knowledge, Socrates points to Nicias' view of these matters, and he indicates that while Nicias may be right about the dependence of the *technai* on something outside of themselves, he is right for the wrong reasons, reasons which center on Nicias' total failure to look beyond the private. In his characterization of knowledge, Socrates seems on the surface to claim that a particular knowledge is concerned simply with the way in which its objects come into being. But he is really saying much more than this. While in regards to those things that have come into being and those that are coming into being he speaks only of knowledge of the way in which these things have come and are coming into being, concerning those things which have not yet come into being, he speaks of knowledge not only of the way in which these will come into being, but also of the way in which they would come into being in the noblest manner. He follows this by considering medicine. On the basis of his general statement, one might expect Socrates to speak of both the healthy and the diseased; yet he speaks only of how healthy things will come into being. Socrates speaks only of the healthy because it is this which medicine is concerned to produce, and it is concerned to produce this because health is the body's good by nature. As such, the nature of health itself does not change; it is not sometimes good and sometimes evil; it is simply the body's good. Now, Nicias interprets the body's good in light of a standard which ultimately arises from the body itself, from the body's mortality: he wishes to preserve himself, what his body delimits, beyond the body's evident mortality. Socrates, in his speech concerning knowledge and in his refutation of Nicias' argument, suggests an alternative. The *technai* constitute knowledge

and are productive on the basis of knowledge of things which do not change, as Socrates implies by mentioning "things in all conditions." So, in the doctor's case, this is knowledge of the way in which healthy and diseased things come into being. But these things must be interpreted in light of something else that does not change, of health itself. We have seen at earlier points in the dialogue that doctor and patient share some understanding of what health is, or at least the ability to recognize it; indeed, this is the basis upon which one who claims to possess the knowledge specific to the doctor is judged. But do either doctor or patient know what health itself is? We have seen in this dialogue how difficult it is to state what something as apparently self-evident as courage is. Attempting to state what health is would seem to require much more than the ability to recognize the presence or absence of health in one's own body. To say nothing else, it would seem to demand a consideration of such things as health in all its manifestations, in old, young, men, women, athletes, etc., of the relation of the body to the soul and to other bodies, of the way or ways in which health is good, and so on. Does the doctor possess such an account? Socrates implies that he does not, simply by following the example of the doctor with that of the farmer. To the extent that the end of the farmer is properly the provision of food for bodies, his *techne* seems to fall under the rule of medicine. For the farmer is not concerned to know the good of bodies, but the good of what his *techne* oversees, the things that by nature grow from the earth. And the farmer can tend to the good of many such things, from grain and cotton to tobacco and opium. If farming is to provide for the good of the body, it must be ruled; the manner in which its end is fulfilled must be determined by the doctor. So too, the doctor, being concerned with the health of bodies, is capable of producing many particular manifestations of health; his art does not provide him with any guidance as to which kind of health or healths is to be preferred, which is to say, which use or uses of the body his art is to serve in promoting. And so too the general's art, the end of which is victories: whether the general is to use his art only in a defensive manner, or to promote a policy of imperialism, is not determined by generalship. What, then, determines the ends of these various *technai*? Socrates provides an answer to this question when he speaks of a law which ordains that the general rule the diviner. He does not seem to be speaking of Athenian law, which presumably did not prohibit Nicias from taking his diviner with him to Sicily, but instead to

a law based in knowledge, and to what is behind that law, to the political *techne* or the "great prudence" of which he spoke earlier. It is this art which determines the particular ends that the individual *technai* promote, and which does so on the basis of a knowledge that is very different from that embodied by the *technai*, a knowledge which is not particular but comprehensive, which is concerned with the good as a whole, with what is good for man.[91] Now, in other dialogues we find Socrates claiming that this knowledge is the object of the philosopher's search. In the *Laches*, however, we do not find so much as one mention of the word "philosophy," never mind any consideration of that in which the activity of philosophizing consists. It is arguable that this is in a way appropriate to a dialogue which is concerned with courage, which, first, seems of all the virtues to be the farthest removed from knowledge, and second, is that virtue which is most involved in the city's preservation or mere life, with providing the conditions for the city's promotion of the good life. However, the *Laches* does present us with a man who claims to be the philosopher's "kin" in speech, who appears to be open to knowledge and the pursuit of knowledge. This man has now turned out to be, because of his fearfulness, so far removed from the philosopher "in speech" that his concern with the good extends no farther than the concerns which arise ultimately from his body. These concerns blind him to the fact that he is tied to the city, that it is the city which makes possible the provision of the needs and even the good things with which he is so concerned, and which provides the possibility of pursuing a way of life that is concerned with more than mere preservation, including a way of life devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. It is Nicias' fearfulness and lack of endurance which separates him from the city; and at the same time, it is this fearfulness which prevents him from truly standing apart from the city, from pursuing knowledge of things that Socrates has asserted are hard to know (196e5f.); a pursuit which, Socrates has implied, itself calls for endurance (194a1-5).

Socrates does not explicitly raise the question of endurance at any point in his discussion with Nicias. Instead, he undermines Nicias' argument by claiming, on the basis of a distinction between past, present, and future goods and evils, that it really entails a knowledge that is the whole of virtue. In doing so, Socrates surely intends to underscore Nicias' concern with future goods and evils, and his consequent desire for a revelatory knowledge about these things which does not exist. But the manner in which he refutes

Nicias must surely strike us as bizarre, not to say sophistic. His reason for doing so, I believe, is to point to what is missing in Nicias' argument, and to the relation between that missing element and the knowledge that Socrates never denies is involved in courage.

When Socrates reintroduced the question of the parts of virtue (198a), he first asked Nicias whether he thought that the discussants were examining courage by examining it as a part (*meros*, 198a2) of virtue; next, he asked whether Nicias, when he expressed his view of courage, also took courage to be a portion (*morion*, 198a4), there being other parts (*meros*) as well, which all together are called virtue. Now, "part" and "portion" are often used synonymously; but are they simply synonymous? "Portion" certainly does not always seem to imply "part."[92] Are the virtues related to virtue altogether as distinguishable parts or as portions of a whole? "At the beginning," Socrates and Laches agreed that virtue has parts (190c9f, d2), while Nicias here agrees that courage is a portion of virtue. Socrates agains makes use of both "part" and "portion" in his concluding remarks to Nicias. Nicias, he says, has given them a part of courage--"about a third"--while he was asked about the whole of courage. Now, according to Socrates, he appears to be saying that courage is knowledge of all goods and evils; what he is now claiming is not a portion of virtue, but virtue altogether, while they have proceeded on the agreement that courage is one of the portions of virtue; they have not found what courage is. Why does Socrates use both "part" and "portion," apparently interchangeably? Perhaps Nicias has defined courage as a portion, rather than as a part of virtue; perhaps this is precisely the problem with what he has said. Nicias has defined courage as a knowledge which has turned out to be not courage, but the whole of virtue. Now, the difference between "part" and "portion" seems to be that while "portion" denotes an amount or quantity of a whole, "part" denotes not simply amount or quantity, but the particulars which compose a complex whole, and which differ from each other not simply in terms of quantity but in kind. How might this be pertinent to what Nicias has argued? Nicias has spoken of a courage which involves knowledge alone. How is he to distinguish this knowledge from that which the other virtues involve? Can he do so without considering those parts of the soul other than the part which is capable of knowing, without considering the powers of the non-rational part of the soul? Nicias has completely neglected that power which Laches called endurance; he has made no mention

whatsoever of a power which enables a man to overcome fear. Socrates is implying here, I believe, that it is this power which distinguishes courage from the other virtues, which justifies our regarding courage as "a" virtue. It is this power which "colors"[93] that portion of the knowledge that is virtue as courage, which together with that knowledge forms the part of virtue which we call courage. In speaking of knowledge alone, Nicias has been speaking at most about knowledge which all the virtues, or virtue altogether, involves, which of itself cannot be considered courage because, as Socrates says, it is only a part of courage; it is the part of courage that Nicias neglects which distinguishes that portion of the knowledge that virtue as a whole involves as "courage."[94]

199e-201c: Dissolution of the Deliberative Community

With Nicias' admission of defeat, Laches once again goes on the offensive; he moves in for the kill, as it were. He remarks that he had very great hope that with the wisdom from Damon, Nicias would discover what courage is, since Nicias thought contemptously of the answers he gave to Socrates. Laches has not failed to notice that Nicias has completely ignored Laches' definition, except to claim that what Laches--and the many--call courage is really stupid boldness. What he has failed to notice is that Socrates has not denied that courage has something to do with wisdom or knowledge. Laches has less reason to crow than he thinks; he has not changed his opinion, or even begun to believe that his definition might not be sufficient. Indeed, his sarcastic claim that he had "great hope" that Nicias would discover courage reveals more than Laches perhaps would wish: his hope in fact has been that Nicias would not discover courage.

Nicias replies to Laches' taunt with a similar charge to that which he earlier made against Laches: Laches does not care that he was recently revealed to know nothing about courage, but looks towards Nicias being shown to be in the same condition. In Nicias' opinion, Laches does a "truly human" thing: he looks not towards himself but towards others. Nicias thinks that Laches simply wished to drag him down to Laches' own level; he thinks that Laches is motivated by envy. But this would require the recognition on Laches' part that he was revealed to know nothing in the conversation with Socrates, and Laches does not think this, and never has; indeed, Laches seemed to think that that conversation revealed primarily, if not solely, a lack of facility in speech on his part. Laches'

confidence that he knows what courage is may have been shaken by that discussion. But Socrates never suggested that Laches knew nothing about courage; and he never suggested that Laches was lacking in courage. Nicias, on the other hand, has suggested both. Laches has not "looked towards" Nicias out of an implicit recognition that he completely lacks knowledge of courage and a consequent desire to prevent Nicias from having more than him in this regard, but out of a fear that if Nicias is right, he will be revealed as such. And Nicias, in explicitly suggesting as much, has only encouraged Laches' attacks. Laches has been concerned to defend what he has, rather than to take away what Nicias has.

On the other hand, Nicias now confirms that he too "looks towards others." Whereas Laches frankly admitted his inability to grasp courage in speech, Nicias is unwilling to admit even this: he has, in his view, spoken suitably about these things; Laches alone has been revealed to know nothing. Nicias' speech--not his understanding--about courage requires at most some revision, some "fine tuning," which, however, he does not intend to undertake on his own, but instead with the help of Damon and others--not, we should note, with the help of Socrates. Nicias, too, looks to others for his understanding of these things.

These two political men, then, are unwilling to look to each other in anything but a hostile manner. Neither recognizes that the other has spoken of something which he lacks. Instead, each regards his own position as adequate, and on the basis of this, each misjudges the motives and character of the other. The generals, and the things with which they have been identified as the dialogue progressed, seem to represent fundamental political alternatives; and judging from these things, and from the generals' behavior towards each other, they seem to be natural political opponents, whom Socrates has tried, and failed, to bring together.[95]

With Nicias' statement of how things seem to him to stand--for his part, he has spoken suitably, and if something needs revision, Damon will set it right--Nicias indicates that he does not intend to continue the search for courage, presumably because there is no need to search for what one already knows. In his response, Laches indicates that he too is abandoning the search, that he no longer is ready or sees any need to endure in it; the vexation and love of victory which moved Laches to endure have apparently been

soothed by Nicias' defeat. However, Laches endures in at least one respect. With a final parting shot at his counterpart--"Well, you are indeed wise, Nicias" (200c2)--he gives his final counsel: the old men should bid farewell to the generals regarding the education of sons, and not let Socrates go, as he has said from the beginning. If his children were of an age to be educated, he would do the same. For the second time, Laches refers to what he said at the beginning, where he urged Lysimachus not to let Socrates go on the basis of Socrates' behavior at Delium, behavior which, in Laches' eyes, entitled Socrates to speak about noble things. Does Laches persist in urging Lysimachus not to let Socrates go for the same reason, or does he now do so on the basis of another kind of deed, on what Laches has seen of Socrates in speech? Has Laches been opened to speech at least to this extent? What he says here seems to indicate that he has. "At the beginning," he said that he, like all public men, had been heedless and neglectful towards both his children and other private affairs, a price which Laches then seemed to be willing to pay. Now, however, he seems less willing. Laches may not have the "courage" to start over at his age, but he has at least begun to manifest some concern for his children's education.

Nicias agrees with what Laches says: the generals are in harmony at least regarding the course which the old men should now pursue. Nicias and Laches agree that Socrates is able to educate. They apparently think that Socrates has proven this in deed, in spite of his assertions that he does not possess the art of education; it seems that in regards to education, Socrates' deeds are not in harmony with his speeches--unless, of course, his denials are ironic. Indeed, Nicias now reveals that he has approached Socrates concerning this very thing, and has only turned to others--on Socrates' recommendation--because Socrates himself was unwilling to take over the education of Nicias' son. Nicias does not say why Socrates is always unwilling to educate his son, or whether Socrates has offered any reason for his unwillingness; whether Socrates simply tells Nicias what he has claimed throughout the deliberation cannot be determined. But if this is what Socrates offers by way of explanation, Nicias must regard it as inadequate, if not less than frank, for he apparently has little doubt that Socrates can educate; he now urges Lysimachus to see whether Socrates is more willing to take over the education of Aristides and Thucydides.

Lysimachus replies that it would be just for Socrates to be willing, since he too would be willing to do many things for Socrates which he would not be willing to do for

very many others; he then turns to Socrates to see if he will pay some heed and join in the old men's zeal for their sons to become as good as possible. Once again Lysimachus grounds his appeal in justice; but whereas the first time Lysimachus attempted to obtain Socrates' advice by mentioning that he and Socrates' father were comrades and the closest of friends, here he speaks only of mutual benefit: Socrates' willingness to do for him what he apparently is not willing to do for many others will be reciprocated by Lysimachus. Now, it is interesting that Lysimachus does not, in the face of Socrates' unwillingness, appeal to the justice based in caring for the things of the father, for this surely provides a tie between Lysimachus and Socrates that does not exist between Socrates and Nicias (Nicias' claim to be Socrates' kin in speech notwithstanding). For some reason, Lysimachus no longer seems to think that Socrates will be moved by such an appeal.

Once again, however, Socrates is unwilling, and once again his unwillingess apparently arises from a justice based in knowledge. He replies to Lysimachus that it would indeed be a dreadful thing to be unwilling to join in someone's zeal to become as good as possible. So if he had been revealed to know in the discussion, and the other not to, it would be just to summon him to this work; but since they were all at a loss, in his opinion none should be chosen. Now, we may begin by noting that Socrates speaks not simply of knowing, but of being revealed to know; the latter, he asserts, is the ground upon which the choice of educator should be based. But first of all, Socrates has not been revealed not to know; and second, the discussion with the generals has surely revealed that he knows <u>something</u> about both education and courage, and more than he has explicitly admitted. Indeed, his interlocuters' agreement, and particularly Lysimachus' agreement, that Socrates is the man they seek, is based in large part upon what the discussion has revealed about Socrates. And has not Socrates himself given us some reason to regard his speech here as somewhat less than frank? Socrates has once before replied to Lysimachus' invocation of justice by appealing to a different justice. When Lysimachus asked him to give his opinion about the learnable, Socrates' response was that it seemed to him "most just" that the generals, being both older than he and more experienced in such matters, should speak first. It was "most just" that they speak first, then, because they, being older and more experienced, were presumably more knowing

than he; greater knowledge gives one a greater claim to speak. Surely the same justice now gives Socrates at least a greater claim as well. Why does he decline to exercise that claim? Perhaps because this justice, while giving Socrates such a claim, does not necessarily give Lysimachus a claim on Socrates. In this regard, we should consider the first thing that Socrates says in reply to Lysimachus' request. Socrates says that it would be a dreadful thing to be unwilling to join in someone's zeal to become best; he does not say that it would be a dreadful thing to be unwilling to join in someone's zeal for another--even a son--to become best. Socrates' statement turns our attention to the sons, who might seem to have been entirely lost sight of during the discussion, although it has ostensibly been for their sakes. The concluding remarks of the dialogue--Socrates' counsel, and Lysimachus' counterproposal together with Socrates' tentative acceptance of it--indicate that Socrates' willingness to meet Lysimachus' request turns upon the sons themselves.

The counsel which Socrates offers is this: it is necessary for all of them to seek in common as good a teacher as possible, most of all for themselves--for they are in need--and then for the lads, sparing neither money nor anything else; they should not let themselves remain in their present condition. And if someone should ridicule them for thinking it worthwhile to frequent teachers at their age, they must cite Homer in their defense, who said that "it is not good for shame to be present to a needy man." Thus, putting such a one aside, they are to take care in common of themselves and the lads.

Socrates' final words thus propose what must strike us, as it seems to strike Socrates and, no doubt, his interlocuters as well, as a bold, not to say incredible, course of action. But he proposes it with cautious foresight, first, by taking care to suggest that his speech is not one to be divulged, and second, by providing for this project's defense. The dialogue ends as it began, with a proposal to form a private community; but while that of Lysimachus was aimed at providing for education to political excellence and fame, at producing or reproducing political leaders such as Aristides "the Just," Socrates' proposed community is aimed not at "doing" but at "knowing." Moreover, they are, he says, to seek teachers most of all for themselves, and "only then" for the sons. It is hard to imagine a more impractical pedagogic plan: this daring proposal seems to ignore the fact that the education of sons imposes the necessity of "seizing the moment." And in

what will the activity of this community consist? It is to seek teachers; Socrates simply proposes a continuation of the activity to which he turned the present community.

Socrates proposes that this community be formed of all of his interlocuters, but there is reason to believe that he does not intend or expect it to include the generals, that it will be private in this sense as well. The defense with which he equips it is aimed solely at Lysimachus, whose preface indicated that the old men were very sensitive to the possibility of receiving ridicule in deciding whom to approach for advice. Socrates now reassures Lysimachus on this point: their novel pedagogic project will be defended against ridicule by appealling to the traditional educator of the Greeks.[96] Furthermore, when Lysimachus replies to Socrates' proposal, he bids only Socrates to come to his house the next day, and Socrates does not object to the exclusion of the generals. But that Socrates does not expect the generals to join in a new search becomes most evident when we realize why Socrates makes this proposal: once again he is attempting to provide an opening for himself. Nicias has just stated that whenever he asks Socrates to take over the education of his son, Socrates declines to do so, and suggests others instead. Socrates is aware of other men who can presumably contribute something to a son's education; but he makes no mention of them here, and the reason why he does not may well be that he has some interest in the sons himself, as we shall see more clearly in a moment. Socrates makes this proposal in order to pursue this interest: Lysimachus is sure to be interested in a proposal to seek teachers for the sons, since this is exactly what he and Melesias have been doing.

Lysimachus professes himself willing to learn with the lads, and most zealously by as much as he is the oldest. He now seems willing to do for Socrates what he likely would not be willing to do for very many others. It is unclear whether his zeal is genuine, or whether his willingness is seen by him as necessary to procure the help of Socrates. He tells Socrates to come to his house tomorrow at dawn--i.e., at the earliest possible time--so that they may deliberate about these things: perhaps he expects Socrates to direct him to a competent teacher for the boys, or perhaps in the privacy of his own home he will be able to persuade Socrates to care for the boys himself. What is clear is that he does not expect to engage in the sort of seeking which he has just seen, for he now breaks up the conversation and hence the search for courage prior to its completion,

which in his view it is surely pointless to continue, now that he has what he wants.

Socrates speaks the final words of the dialogue: he will come to Lysimachus' house tomorrow, if the god is willing. Socrates agrees, but only tentatively, to Lysimachus' modification of what he has just proposed. His cooperation depends upon something outside of himself, on "the god"--or does it? Anyone with more than a cursory familiarity with the Platonic Socrates cannot help but be reminded by this of Socrates' famous "*diamonic*" voice. Why would Socrates foresee the possibility that his *daimon* will take some interest in his proposed action? Insofar as the *Laches* provides no consideration of Socrates' *daimon*, it concludes on a note of uncertainty; the dialogue seems incomplete, it ends by pointing beyond itself. The most detailed description by Socrates of his *daimon* in the Platonic corpus is found in the dialogue *Theages*. This description occurs during a discussion with Demodocus, a wealthy rural Athenian gentleman, and his son Theages; Socrates is moved to speak of his *daimon* in response to a request similar to that just made by Lysimachus, a request by Demodocus that Socrates take over the education of young Theages.[91] This alone arguably provides some reason for us to turn to the *Theages*. But we are more powerfully enouraged to do so by the following consideration. Socrates' account of his *daimon* includes a description of its power in regards to Socrates' "being with" (*sunousia*, *Theages* 129e2) those who spend time with him, including and primarily young men. Socrates divides this influence into four categories. To many, he says, it is adverse, and it is not possible for them to be helped by spending time with him, hence he is unable to do so; while with many it does not prohibit his being with them, but they are not helped by it. Others are assisted in their intercourse by the *daimonic* power: some find the benefit both firm and enduring, while for many it lasts only as long as they are not parted from Socrates. Now, in his description of other aspects of the *daimon*, Socrates makes use of many examples of others who have been affected by it. In regards to those who would spend time with him, however, he mentions individual cases only concerning one of the four categories which he delineates--and there he speaks of none other than young Aristides and Thucydides. The *Theages* indicates that, subsequent to the action of the *Laches*, both of the sons have spent time with Socrates; the *Theages* "completes" the *Laches*.[93]

What, then, does the *Theages* teach us about the *daimon*, and in particular, what light does it shed on the enigmatic words with which Socrates concludes the *Laches*? A commentary on the *Laches* is obviously not the place for extended consideration of another dialogue; it is sufficient to note that careful reading of the *Theages* seems to suggest that the basis upon which Socrates' *daimon* exerts itself, at least in regards to those young men who would be with him, is the nature of the individual in question.[99] Socrates' final words suggest that his participation in Lysimachus' project depends upon the nature of the sons themselves, and that Socrates' final proposal, and indeed his initial willingness to join in Lysimachus' community and his subsequent actions, have all reflected the fact that Socrates is not familiar with the boys, and knows very little about their abilities. Indeed, Plato emphasizes that we have no way of making any judgements about the sons: only one of the sons speaks, and only once, and we do not even know which of the two is speaking (181a3); Plato intentionally disguises even this from the reader. In the face of this lack of knowledge, Socrates first cautiously agreed to take part in the discussion, and now cautiously proposes a community through which he will be able to determine whether and to what extent the sons will benefit by associating with him. The deliberation began and proceeded with no consideration of the nature of those whose education was being deliberated upon. One reason why the dialogue ends on such an ambiguous note is that the sons' education cannot proceed--or will proceed at the sons' peril--until this question has been addressed.

III. CONCLUSION

The *Laches* is one of the "aporetic" dialogues. the question which it raises is left unanswered: it leaves us "perplexed." Furthermore, many things which seem to be pertinent to the question of courage are only briefly considered, and in some cases, not considered at all. For example, *thumos*, or "spirit," which in the *Republic* is said to be the part of the soul to which courage is connected, is never mentioned in the dialogue; Socrates shies away from any examination of the soul itself. Nor is that power which Laches identifies as courage, and which seems to belong to the thumotic part of the soul, endurance, examined: once Laches has given his definition, Socrates immediately introduces prudence. It seems inappropriate, not to say presumptuous, therefore, to "conclude" an examination of the dialogue, for to do so suggests a finality which the dialogue itself seems to preclude. Yet, the dialogue itself also indicates that appearances are sometimes deceptive; what is missing in speech may be illustrated in deed. Furthermore, the aporetic character of the dialogue itself may teach us something about courage. Not all of Plato's dialogues are aporetic; does not this fact alone raise the question why those dialogues which are aporetic have this feature? In spite of the dialogue's aporetic appearance, then, we may have some reason to act in the face of its *aporia*; we shall therefore risk the possibility of presuming where we should not, to the extent of closing our consideration of the dialogue with some tentative comments about its teaching.

The speeches of the dialogue suggest that courage involves both non-rational and rational powers of the soul, both endurance and prudence. However, while courage may call for both of these things, endurance seems to be prior to prudence, to be a natural power, which cannot, or can only to a limited extent, be instilled through education. Moreover, this endurance seems to be more essential to courage, and perhaps is itself often courage, as Socrates says, because of the limits to prudence, to the extent to which human beings can be knowing. Courage seems to require prudence or the guidance of prudence; at the same time, it seems to come into its own most of all where prudence is lacking or powerless. All of these things are suggested not only by the speeches of the dialogue. Courage is discussed with two military men, each of whom speaks only of one element of courage. Socrates, however, seems much more interested in Laches than

Nicias. His attempts to educate in the dialogue seem aimed primarily, if not solely, at Laches. Not only his conversation with Laches, but that with Nicias as well, are intended in part to open Laches to the possibility that courage involves prudence, while he appears to make little effort to open Nicias to the possibility that courage involves endurance--the very thing which Nicias seems to lack, and which in the end renders him uneducable in this virtue. Socrates goes out of his way to keep Laches involved in the hunt for courage, and in the course of that hunt, forms an alliance with him. And Socrates' attempts to educate Laches seem in the end to founder on the fact that Laches is simply too old: one perhaps cannot "teach an old dog new tricks."[100]

Having said this, however, we may wonder whether these are the only elements, or even the most important elements, of courage. The aporetic character of the dialogue may itself cause such wonder, for the *aporia* arises from the speeches which each general makes about courage. It may be the case that the dialogue concludes on this note because neither general has given a definition that combines these two elements; but we should also consdier the possibility that even this would be insufficient, that there is something else which must be taken into account if courage is to be adequately defined. Socrates suggests as much through the very example which he uses to elicit Laches' definition. Not only endurance, but "quickness" as well, seems to be involved in courage; Socrates' example points to the possibility that courage involves not one, but two non-rational powers of the soul. Indeed, it may well be the case that this, rather than endurance, is what truly defines courage, or what defines "true" courage. Socrates certainly points to this possibility in the course of his discussion with Nicias. He asks Nicias about the courage of wild animals; Nicias' response seems correct insofar as it points out that (some) wild animals are bold, are fearless. Whereas endurance, as articulated by Laches, necessarily involves fear or some other motion of the soul against which one endures, a courage arising from boldness may well be "fearless." Laches, in his emphatic assertion that "we all agree" about the courage of these animals, seems to contradict his earlier definition, or at least to suggest that it is incomplete, that it does not encompass all cases of courage. Furthermore, Laches seems to contradict his definition not only in speech, but in deed as well; his "quickness," in particular his quick reactions to Nicias' utterances, indicate that he is not only enduring, but bold as well. And Socrates'

attempts to moderate Laches, to "slow him down," by opening him to a prudence which would cause him to "look before he leaps," also points in this direction. The dialogue is named "Laches"; we have some reason to follow Laches' musical theory at least to this extent, that it is Laches' deeds, more than his speeches, which point to the core of courage or what is most essential to courage. Boldness certainly seems distinguishable from endurance; perhaps in some cases--such as Laches'--boldness is the basis of the ability to endure. Indeed, in a sense endurance may be more comprehensive, and less "from the beginning," than boldness. Laches speaks of endurance of the soul in response to Socrates' request that he say what power is involved in every instance of courage. Given Laches' emphasis of deeds, we would expect him to try to speak of what courage "looks like" in every case. Socrates raises no further questions about this endurance; is it not possible that this "power" is divisible, that it has more than one source? The initial portion of the conversation between Socrates and Laches suggested one possibility: whereas Laches spoke of a willingness to remain in the ranks, Socrate spoke only of remaining in the ranks. Laches did not notice Socrates' "slight change," nor did he make such a distinction in regards to his comprehensive definition of courage. Yet something other than "willingness" might be responsible for such endurance; one obvious alternative to willingness is compulsion.

Why then does Socrates choose not to raise this dimension of courage? First of all, perhaps, because he seems primarily concerned to discuss with Laches the role of prudence in courage, to open Laches to prudence; he does not examine endurance for the same reason. But of equal importance is the fact that Socrates moves away from any discussion of the soul and its constitution, for reasons which we considered above; insofar as boldness appears to be a manifestation of spirit, consideration of the former would seem to require consideration of the latter as well. Finally, the neglect of boldness may well be connected to the aporetic character of the dialogue. Might not its *aporia* enjoin us to be bold in questioning the dialogue, to refuse to admit defeat in the face of the dialogue's apparent inconclusiveness?

The latter two reasons for the apparent neglect of boldness point towards the dialogue's consideration of courage in relation to both politics and philosophy as well; in regards to these things, the presentation is almost entirely in the deeds of the dialogue. It

is one of the few dialogues in which Socrates converses with mature, practising political men.[101] And almost from their first words, it seems that these political men are at war with each other; they seem to be natural political rivals. Furthermore, insofar as each is identified with a city in the dialogue--Laches, with Sparta, and Nicias, with Athens--they seem to represent fundamental political alternatives in light of which, the dialogue implies, courage assumes an important position. Perhaps Sparta and Athens promote different "kinds" of political courage: in his initial mention of courage, the "Spartan" Laches seemed to stress a common, "steadfast" courage, a courage shown in the ranks, while the "Athenian" Nicias spoke solely of an individual courage used to promote private ends, and in particular to distinguish oneself; the generals' subsequent comments about courage confirmed and developed these initial statements. Now, Socrates seems to make the attempt, at least during the discussion with Nicias, to mediate between these two cities, i.e., between their dialogic representatives. The failure of this attempt suggests that in some way the virtue courage requires the combination of two elements which can be combined only with great difficulty, that courage is in this way a "duality."[102] The promotion of courage, or at least political courage, the virtue by which the city in the most immediate sense stands or falls, may require a way of life which rejects innovation and the private in favour of one oriented to stability, tradition, and devotion to the public things. For the city, faced with the ever-present possibility of destruction, requires that its citizens be willing to make what for most is the greatest sacrifice, the sacrifice of their own lives, or the lives of their sons, on its behalf; and a willingness to risk this seems always tenuous and easily undermined. To the extent that the city allows or promotes an emphasis of the individual and the private--to the extent that it is "Athenian"--it seems to endanger that willingness upon which it depends, for with this emphasis comes the possibility of many different ways of life, including a way of life devoted to inquiry, and in particular inquiry about the political things, including those beliefs and opinions which the city is concerned to promote. Those opinions--about just and unjust, honorable and shameful--seem to be <u>the</u> support for political virtue, or the virtue which the city requires, and they seem necessary above all in the case of courage, for it is courage which demands the greatest sacrifice. As such, any questioning of these opinions would seem to be most harmful in regards to courage. Nicias seems to represent this result in deed; he does not

seem to represent Athens "as a whole," as Laches seems to represent Sparta "as a whole"--for how could one individual represent a city which is open to many different ways of life?[103]--but rather, one consequence of that city's openness, one which is particularly important in regards to the question of courage. What Nicias has heard from Damon--and from Socrates--may point to what courage, or courage in the fullest sense, would require--knowledge of what is truly dreadful; but the prudence which Nicias calls courage is not a prudence based in this knowledge, but rather a calculating reason and forethought which serves the interests of the non-rational, of bodily desires and fears, pleasures and pains. This appears to be the ordinary understanding of prudence: it is this sort of prudence of which Socrates speaks in his conversation with Laches, who seems unable to conceive of an alternative understanding, and it is, in the end, the prudence manifested in deed by Nicias. It is perhaps the case that Nicias could be moved towards courage only to a limited extent even in the absence of the philosopher and those who are, in some ways at least, his "kin in speech," the sophists, and in this we see a distinction regarding courage between men like Laches, who seem to possess a natural power which enables them to withstand the powerful urgings of fear, and men like Nicias, who can only be induced to do so, if at all, through shame and the threat of dishonor--perhaps a distinciton between an endurance based in boldness, and an endurance based in compulsion. But the "wisdom" which Nicias has received seems to be most harmful precisely in this regard, for it has "liberated" Nicias from the influence of such threats, and in doing so, has removed whatever possibility he had of possessing even this kind of courage.[104]

The *Laches* also presents us with an illustration of the philosopher in action, engaged in his characteristic practice; we would expect, given its theme, that it would address the question of the role of courage in that activity, even though the word "philosophy" does not appear in the dialogue. Now, the philosopher seems most identified with the virtue wisdom. Yet his very activity is defined not by wisdom, but by its lack; he is a "lover of wisdom," man who <u>pursues</u> wisdom. And it is this very lack which points to the essential role of courage in philosophizing. Indeed, at times Socrates speaks in the dialogue as if courage is a synonym for philosophy. He tells Laches that they must endure in their search for "courage itself"; yet there is no guarantee, indeed no good reason to

think that the search will be successful; moreover, while they are to endure in order to avoid the ridicule of "courage itself," their endurance will not defend them, indeed may open them to, the ridicule of men, and may simply result in a dissolution of their own claim to possess courage. The philosopher's very love perhaps calls for courage more than any other virtue, for the object of that love, wisdom, or a comprehensive knowledge of the whole, seems impossible to attain. The very structure of the *Laches* points to this: is it not peculiarly appropriate that this dialogue should be aporetic, and moreover, that the conversation which it presents seems to lead from *aporia* to *aporia*? Does not an adequate understanding of courage require an understanding of that thing which, above all else, calls for courage: the nature of death? And does not the question of death necessarily raise the question how one should live one's life? And does not this require an understanding of human nature, and in particular the nature of the human soul, and in turn, an understanding of that nature of which human nature is a part?[105] Enduring in the face of one *aporia*, it seems, simply leads to another; in the end, only the philosopher seems willing or able to endure in his endurance against them.

Moreover, the philosopher's activity not only poses its own risks, but exposes him to risks from another source as well. For the philosopher is necessarily a part of, and in many ways dependent upon, the political community, and he can neglect this fact only at his own peril; he must philosophize politically, or in a politic manner--or at least, it is prudent for him to do so. Moreover, since he is a citizen as well as a philosopher, he may naturally wish to avoid harming "his own," his fellow citizens--and their sons.[106] This, too, is presented in deed in the *Laches*, and in fact it seems to be this more than anything else which ties the dialogue together; the *Laches* is an eminently political consideration of courage. The philosopher, perhaps going about his usual business, happens upon a deliberation aimed at instilling political excellence, a deliberation which may well have been occasioned by the influence of the philosopher himself. He is informed that those for the sake of whom the deliberation is taking place have frequently praised Socrates--information which must surely pique his interest. He agrees to give his counsel, "if he is able," but defers to the "authorities," the generals. Once the generals have disagreed, he boldly assumes control of the deliberation; having done this, he cautiously resets the course of the deliberation, while emphasizing the risks that attend

education--and particularly the risks connected to the "new education," the education offered by the sophists. He gains his interlocuters' assent to the new arrangement, and then redirects the deliberation to a discussion of courage, through which both political men--and also, Socrates emphasizes, he himself--are shown to lack knowledge of what courage is. He appears ready to endure in the search for courage, but instead, proposes a search for teachers, both for themselves and for the sons; i.e., he expresses a willingness to participate in a search for what Lysimachus and Melesias have been looking for from the beginning. And when Lysimachus suggests an alternative, Socrates quickly, but tentatively, accepts it. Throughout, then, Socrates proceeds in a manner that is both cautious and bold. We have suggested that his behavior turns upon the sons themselves, on the fact that Socrates knows nothing about them; Socrates' deeds reflect what is not discussed in speech--nature, and specifically, the nature of the sons. Not knowing whether the sons will benefit by spending time with him, or even by witnessing the full extent of his powers in speech--actions sometimes speak louder than words, and apparently the boys have already been influenced by what they have seen of Socrates--he moves very cautiously. He is singularly gentle with both of the generals, and goes out of his way to say that he shares the dilemma which they are in. The *Laches* presents a striking contrast to what Socrates in the *Apology* claims always results from his conversations with political men:

> I considered . . . one of the politicians . . . [and] tried to show him that he supposed he was wise, but was not. So from this I became hateful both to him and to many of those present. . . . After this, then, I kept going to one after another, all the while perceiving with pain and fear that I was becoming hateful.[107]

That his conversations with the generals have not inspired such hatred must be due at least in part to Socrates' manner of proceeding. Yet Socrates' lack of familiarity with the boys also seems to require that he take some risks: the boys may well benefit by being with Socrates--and it "would be a dreadful thing," Socrates says, "to be unwilling to join in someone's zeal to become as good as possible"; he has here been presented with an opportunity to do so--indeed, by the end of the discussion, Lysimachus is ready to hand the sons over to Socrates. This, too, has resulted from Socrates' behavior--again, actions sometimes speak louder than words; despite his protestations to the contrary,

Socrates possesses, and has shown that he possesses, something which the generals lack. In order to take advantage of the opportunity with which he has been presented, if only to determine whether the sons can gain some benefit by being with him, he has had to undermine the political at least to this extent. Socrates appears willing to run this risk. Faced with this unknown, Socrates has proceeded in a manner which appears to manifest not only prudence and endurance, but quickness and caution as well; not only philosophy itself, but political philosophy, philosophizing in the city, calls for courage on the part of the philosopher.

IV. NOTES

1 Leo Strauss, The City and Man (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 60.

2 It is not a little ironic, given their emphasis of their own obscurity, that through Plato's efforts, Lysimachus and Melesias are still known to us over 2000 years after their time. Still, the dialogue seems to give them their just due, for what they are remembered for is nothing other than their obscurity.

3 We should note that the dialogue seems to contain two anachronisms, both of which are connected to the relative ages of the participants. First, while Lysimachus and Melesias are treated as contemporaries in the dialogue, our historical records suggest that Melesias was about a generation younger than Lysimachus, and perhaps even younger than the generals. Second, while Socrates was contemporary with the generals, according to the dates we have for Nicias, he acts in the dialogue as if he is significantly younger than these men. Here, especially then, Plato has made Socrates "young (neos) and handsome (kalos)" (cf. Second Letter 314c).

4 All bracketed citations refer to the Oxford text of the *Laches* [Plato, *Opera*, ed. John Burnet, Vol. 3: *Theages, Charmides, Laches, Lysis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903)]. Quotations from the dialogue are from the translation, as yet unpublished, by James H. Nichols, Jr.

5 "Maintenance at the prytaneum at public expense was an honor reserved for victors at the Olympic games, outstanding generals, and representatives of families whose ancestors had performed great deeds for the city." Thomas West, *Plato's Apology of Socrates: An Interpretation, With A New Translation*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 65, n. 108; see also *Apology* 36d. It is clear that both Lysimachus and Melesias qualified as representatives of distinguished families; that Lysimachus at least was granted such maintenance, see Plutarch, *Aristides*, 27.

6 Lysimachus' characterization of the many's attitude towards education might be taken to imply that he completely ignores the role of nature in education. But, as we have argued, Lysimachus mentions the many by way of encouraging the generals to become concerned about education; his tactic presupposes that the generals distinguish themselves from the many in the same manner as he does, i.e, on the basis of a nature arising from descent. Lysimachus surely distinguishes himself from the many; since according to his report he shares a lack of deeds with the many, would not a claim on his part that the ability to perform such deeds is simply a result of education undermine the grounds upon which he does so?

7 Lysimachus' speeches--both those which he makes at the dinner table, and his speech here about those speeches--seem to be aimed in part at inducing the boys to care for themselves by emphasizing the difference between himself and the distinguished men of which he speaks, and the pain and shame which his obscurity has caused him as well. And some such intention as this would seem to be why the old men have brought the boys to the display and the subsequent discussion; both of these things will display *ad oculos* what the boys can become if only they care for themselves.

8 Cf. *Republic* 486c, 535a-c.

9 If we were inclined to judge harshly of Lysimachus, we might well wonder whether he here reveals that he is not being entirely candid in accounting for his lack of deeds, and whether he sees fit to encourage his son's attentiveness and obedience because he himself was lacking in these very respects. We might be encouraged to adopt this view when we consider what Socrates has to say concerning the education of both Lysimachus and Melesias in the *Meno*. He is discussing with Anytus the question whether there are teachers of virtue. Socrates, by way of arguing that even the most distinguished gentlemen do not seem able to transmit their own virtue, even to their own sons, illustrates his claim with four examples, including the elder Aristides and Thucydides.

According to him, both men provided their sons with the best education possible, but to no avail. See *Meno*, 94a, c-d.

10 That such proposals were not unheard of, see *Protagoras* 320a, *Theages* 127a, *Republic* 328d.

11 Cf. Leo Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1968), p. 12.

12 In light of what we have argued concerning Lysimachus' view of this matter, Laches' words must be very encouraging for him to hear. Is this an instance of that "second-guessing" about which Lysimachus spoke earlier?

13 And not only has Nicias cared for his son, but for other private affairs as well: he was a man of considerable wealth and interests (see, e.g., Plutarch, *Nicias* 3, 4.) Nicias simply does not fit Laches' characterization of political men; why then does Laches seemingly include him in it? Perhaps Nicias and Laches are not that familiar with one another. Yet Nicias' material wealth was well-known in Athens; Laches surely cannot be completely unaware of this. Moreover, the subsequent action of the dialogue does suggest that the generals are familiar with one another. In light of this, we might take Laches' claim to be the opening salvo in the competition which ensues between these two political rivals. That Lysimachus and Melesias decided to approach these two prominent political men for advice, and moreover brought them together in order to do so, might well strike us as almost the most notable intrusion of chance into the events of the dialogue. Almost, because its most notable intrusion is surely the introduction of Socrates.

14 Cf. *Apology* 23b4-c1.

15 We are not completely in the dark regarding this last point; we have some reason to think that Socrates has indeed heard the conversation thus far. Once Socrates has been introduced, Lysimachus asks him what he "asserts about the subject we began with" (181c7); his request presupposes that Socrates has been present "from the beginning."

16 The dramatic date of the *Laches* is somewhere between the battle of Delium in 424 and Laches' death in 418. In the *Apology*, Plato has Socrates request his judges to punish and pain his sons in the same way that he has pained his judges when the sons grow up (41e). At the time of his death in 399, then, Socrates' sons were still young. See also *Phaedo* 60a, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Socrates."

17 Cf. *Republic* 376e2-4.

18 The word which Lysimachus uses for "know"-- *gignosko*(180d5)--means, among other things, to mark, discern, perceive, but primarily to know by observation or learning. The same word, then, could apply to both of the ways in which Lysimachus has just become knowing about Socrates.

19 Indeed, it would be hard for one to understand, based on Lysimachus' statements, why his father was known as Aristides "the Just".

20 Mark Blitz, "An Introduction to Plato's *Laches*," *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* 5 (Winter 1975), p. 191.

21 Cf. *Apology* 22d.

22 This is indicated more explicitly by Nicias' comments at 182d1f. He says there that the learnable will make a man appear more dreadful to his enemies by imparting gracefulness to him. The word translated as "enemies" is *echthros*; the word simply means "one's enemy," as opposed to *polemios*, derived from *polemos*, "war," which denotes an enemy in war. This is the only use of *echthros* in the dialogue; it is also the only time that Nicias speaks of enemies.

23 And given Nicias' concerns, similar considerations of security and nobility may arise

for him in regards to generalship. The security arising from the fighting in armour results from the control over one's fate in situations of individual combat which it imparts. But, needless to say, the individual hoplite is unable to control the situations in which he finds himself in a larger sense (cf. 191b6-c5, 193a2-9): such control, to the extent that it exists, would seem to arise from the *techne* of generalship. Might not Nicias think that, in regards to the battlefield, possession of the true or complete *techne* of generalship provides the ultimate combination of security and nobility?

24 In light of Nicias' comments about the noble, the learnable's utility vis-a-vis generalship would seem to be its greatest or highest benefit. This in turn suggests that, to this point, Nicias' speech has been ordered according to his evaluation of the worth of the learnable's various benefits: it proceeds from the lowest benefit--the learnable occupies young men, and hence hinders them from becoming any worse--to the highest--the learnable incites a desire for generalship. If this is indeed the case, then Nicias' comments about courage and gracefulness appear to be exactly what he says they are: additions, albeit "no small additions." Courage, then, makes its first appearance in the Platonic dialogue about courage as an addition, as an "afterthought." Cf. Blitz, op. cit., p. 194.

25 Nicias speaks of a courage which arises from a hoplite's art, and hence his comments appear to concern only the courage of the man in the ranks. This learnable leads to generalship, according to him; we may therefore wonder whether the general, too, requires courage in order to practise his art, and if so, about the character of his courage. Since Nicias connects courage to confidence, it does not seem that the confidence arising from knowledge which pertains to actual physical combat provides for confidence regarding the things with which a general is concerned. Do the learnables and practises connected with generalship then bring courage with them as well, and do they do so in the same manner as the hoplite's art, viz., by providing one with a technical skill which ensures the ability to "gain the advantage everywhere" and thus to avoid suffering any harm? Moreover, Nicias addressed the technical aspects of the fighting in armour from the point of view of the individual hoplite, rather than that of the city. Hoplite courage, too, is viewed from this perspective; Nicias mentions courage in the context of what is necessary to putting this hoplite's art into practise. The general's art is concerned with the ruling and ordering of many individuals; does his courage reflect this fact, or is it too concerned primarily with the general himself?

26 Nicias speaks of courage and gracefulness "in the same breath;" while he does not explicitly connect them, it seems that an awareness of the efect of one's appearance on one's enemies would contribute to one's confidence. Whether it would contribute to one's courage seems to turn upon whether such confidence is well-founded: can one depend upon one's formidable appearance to reduce risk to the same extent as technical fighting ability?

27 Regarding the latter, note that Laches' only mention of his city by name is not "Athens," but "Attica"(183a8).

28 Cf. Blitz, op. cit., p. 196.

29 The word which Nicias used, translated "gracefulness," is *euschemon* (182c9, d1), literally "well-figured." Laches refers to this when he speaks of "the figure" which Stesilaus cut; the word is *schema* (184a3).

30 And Laches make this point not only "in speech," but "in deed" as well: he indicates to the old men what will result from this art by relating a particular incident that he witnessed, and in doing so, at the same time contributes to Stesilaus' ridiculous reputation.

31 It is noteworthy that Laches says nothing about what for Nicias was an important, if not the most important, benefit of the learnable: according to Nicias, it incites a desire for other noble studies and therefore leads to generalship. The generals are supposedly addressing the question whether the learnable will make, or help to make, young Thucydides and Aristides the best of men; Laches, then, is presumably concerned to prove Nicias wrong above all on this matter. The old men certainly seemed to imply that generalship was a part of this end, both in their references to their fathers, and in seeking

out these two generals; if the learnable leads to generalship, this would seem to constitute an important benefit. Perhaps Laches thinks that the crucial issue is to assess the learnable on its own terms, that if the learnable is deficient in this regard, the possibility that it incites a desire for generalship is not sufficient reason to learn it. Or perhaps his silence on this matter again reveals that Laches focussess primarily on what is common, on what is "Spartan," with a consequent disregard for what is individual.

32 Hence, Laches seems concerned as much to indicate that the very claim to this knowledge may bring a man ridicule, as to indicate that this learnable, because it is technically unsound, will be of little help in attempting to gain fame. This conclusion is supported by the consideration that what Laches says regarding courage in relation to this "sham knowledge" would seem to be as applicable to a genuine martial art: such an art would not preclude error, which opens the courageous man to ridicule; and in this case, others would tend as much, if not more, to attribute the practitioner's courage to his art.

33 And, indirectly, to Socrates as well; Lysimachus regarded the generals' remarks about Socrates as authoritative, but their authority is of course based in reputation.

34 Hence, Socrates' "most just" arrangement did not imply that the generals had a greater claim to speak, but was aimed at showing that none of the advisors could claim sufficient expertise; if the man with a just claim to speak is the man who knows, it is also just that the man who doesn't know not speak (cf. 200e).

35 Hence, when Socrates asks him whether he would obey the greater number of his interlocuters concerning his son's athletic competition or the man who has been educated and trained under a good trainer, Melesias replies "most likely the latter"; when Socrates presses him, asking whether he "would obey him rather than even four of us", Melesias' response is "perhaps".

36 As well, he spoke about the practitioner above in a manner that pointed directly to the trainer.

37 Which is, of course, the aspect of gymnastic that Socrates mentioned.

38 Cf. *Alcibaides* I 121e4-122a.

39 Cf. *Apology* 30e1-5.

40 What Socrates said to Melesias raises a further question. The very terms which he used suggested that a son's becoming good is in a sense a means, is for the sake of the father's house; the Greek word translated "good" is not *agathos*, but *chrestos* (185a6), the primary meaning of which is usefulness. The father, then, is concerned with his son's education for the sake of his house, the city for the sake of its ends; are then the ends of a son's education determined entirely by his connections to family and city, or is there some aspect of it which is for the sake of the son considered apart from these things?

41 *Demiourgos* literally means "one who works for the *demos*," but more particularly, and as used here by Socrates, a handicraftsman, "one who works with his hands."

42 Cf. *Meno* 92e4-93a3, 95b.

43 Cf. Strauss, op. cit., pp. 54-5.

44 Cf. *Euthydemus* 271b9-272a1.

45 Cf. *Apology* 31b4f.

46 Cf. *Apology* 29d4-30b2.

47 Cf. *Apology* 38a1-5, 23b8-10.

48 Perhaps this is the reason for Nicias' somewhat surprising agreement to Socrates'

suggestion that the "thing" with which the deliberation is concerned is the soul; cf. 185e3.

49 Cf. *Republic* 330d4-331b.

50 Cf. 180a6-8 with 188c2-3.

51 The Dorians were regarded as the ancestral race from which the Lacedaemonians emerged, the Ionians as the Athenian ancestors. Laches here plays upon the names of the musical modes to make his point: the Lacedaemonians are the true Greeks. See *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Dorians," "Ionians."

52 Hence, Laches' theory also points to another aspect of his "simplicity" towards speeches: it is unable to account for the man who has deeds but covers them up in speech, i.e., for the ironic man.

53 We might recall at this point that *arete*, as well as *andreia*, can be translated as "courage" or "manliness;" and that *andreia* admits of translation as "virtue" as well as "courage."

54 In mentioning wisdom, Laches surely has the sophists, the "wise ones" who are "all talk," in mind. He may even be thinking of Stesilaus, a man whom he has just seen attempting to feign wisdom or knowledge not only in speech--by "saying great things about himself"--but in deed as well (183c8-d2).

55 And does not the very fact that Laches makes this speech imply that he thinks he has the "right" to make it?

56 It is unclear whether Socrates refers to eyes or to the eyes' possessor here. This ambiguity is mirrored by what he says when he follows this example with the claim that they are consulting about virtue: it is unclear whether he says that they are considering "the way in which virtue, through being present in their [i.e., the old men's] sons, might make their souls better," or that they are considering "the way in which virtue, through being present in the souls of their sons, might make them better." See 190b 4-5.

57 See the preceding note.

58 Cf. *Apology* 22d-e.

59 Recall what Nicias said about Socrates' testing: he points out, Nicias says, what is <u>not</u> noble.

60 Cf. *Protagoras* 329d3-330b3, 349a7-c6.

61 186a3-b7; see above, p. 38.

62 And we may presume that Socrates had a similar intention in mind when he introduced the model of *techne* as a means to determining which of the advisors was competent to educate. Talk of *techne* was likely to "make sense" to the old men, since the *technai* comprise the knowledge that most people are most familiar with, and that they have most confidence in.

63 Cf. *Republic* 518b6-d7. And courage is perhaps the virtue most likely to bring up the question of nature, for it appears at least on the surface to be the virtue which is "by nature" to the greatest extent.

64 Cf. *Symposium* 220d7-221c1.

65 Cf. Stewart Umphrey, "On The Theme of Plato's *Laches*," *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* 6 (Fall 1976), p. 15. We should recall at this point that Laches earlier made a similar distinction: according to him, a courageous man would not be able to escape becoming ridiculous if he attempted to practise the novel fighting art; only a man of "wonderful virtue" would be able to do so (184b6-c4). Given that Laches is a man of

much battlefield experience, his evident admiration for Socrates on the basis of a single deed, and moreover a deed performed in retreat, leads us to suspect that Socrate's deed gives him a claim in Laches' eyes to this "wonderful virtue."

66 The difference between what Laches and Socrates say here renders Laches' musical theory somewhat more ambiquous than he might like. For if there is indeed a difference between their statements, then deeds may not be as simple or self-evident as Laches thinks; one might only be able, if at all, to distinguish deeds which look the same through speech.

67 Cf. Umphrey, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

68 Herodotus, *Histories* 4.120-128.

69 Again, we should note the implications of the Lacedaemonian behavior for Laches' theory of speech and deed.

70 Compare 191a10f. with *Iliad* V. 222-23, VIII 106-07. Socrates omits the word for plain, to which this "knowledge" applies.

71 Homer himself indicates as much in the context from which Socrates takes this quote. Pandaros and Aeneas are about to face the raging Diomedes. Aeneas gives Pandaros the choice of steering the chariot, or of encountering Diomedes while he steers it. Pandaros chooses the latter; the horses, he says,

> . . . will carry better the curved chariot under the driver they know best, if we must give way before the son of Tydeus; for fear they might go wild with terror and not be willing to carry us out of the fighting, as they listen and long for your voice . . . .

Iliad V. 231-34.

72 What is odd about Socrates' examples is that they are all private situations, and moreover, the private looms larger as one proceeds through the list--except for the last thing mentioned, the political. It is as if, having spoken of different forms of warfare--the most evident political manifestation of courage--Socrates then turns to "private" manifestations of it, and includes "the political" (*ta politika*) in this category. Is Socrates suggesting that it is the political which above all else calls for courage on the part of the private man, or the private man par excellence, the philosopher (cf. *Apology* 31c-32e)?

73 And we should note that he no longer speaking of turning around to attack, as he did with reference to the Lacedaemonians.

74 Cf. *Republic* 518b-d.

75 We might note one other thing about Socrates' rather curious statement. While appearing to divide courage, he asks Laches to tell him what is the same in all cases of fighting against these psychic motions. Is it possible for Laches to encompass both "remaining" and "turning around in retreat" in a single definition? Socrates himself suggests something that is common to both; he speaks of both as clever fighters. His statement raises the question whether Laches will meet Socrates' request for a single definition only by speaking of knowledge alone.

76 Socrates' second use of "running" should make us think of racing; whereas he initially used a word (*trecho*, 192a2) which denotes running per se, in defining quickness he uses *dromos* (192b2), which means racing as well as running.

77 Cf. Homer, *Odyssey* XX. 9-21.

78 Blitz, op. cit., p. 213.

79 Socrates seems to question this at 191e9 in asking Laches what each of these things--i.e., courage and cowardice--is (*on*); this suggests that cowardice is something positive, something more than simply the privation of whatever it is that makes a man courageous.

80 The word translated "standing [one's] ground," *hupomeno* (193a9), could also be rendered "awaiting the attack of another."

81 Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a10-13.

82 And this is an example which I find most perplexing, and which may in a sense be the test case of the argument that courage involves or always involves prudence. For what kind of prudence would dictate that a man risk his life for the sake of, say, a complete stranger, or that a good man do so for the sake of a rogue, or a philosopher for the sake of a tyrant? Perhaps such courage--and do we not regard such actions as exceptional or outstanding manifestations of courage?--does involve endurance alone; perhaps we should agree with Laches at least to the extent that these acts of courage are simply noble.

83 What Laches says here may account for his agreement, moments ago, that it is better for many to die rather than to live. Laches appears to believe not only that virtue, but life in general, is fundamentally hard and filled with struggle, in which the good things come to only a few, a struggle from which he is perhaps to some extent saved by his devotion to the city and his consequent neglect of the private things.

84 Cf. Homer, *Iliad* I 225.

85 Note in this regard that Nicias never mentions cowardice.

86 Cf. Leo Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 66; Thucydides 6.49.

87 See Thucydides 7.42-87, especially 50.

88 I.e., as a diviner? Cf. *Symposium* 202d8-203a1.

89 And it appears, from what Nicias says, that Socrates habitually shakes his confidence in his knowledge of what is noble; this may constitute an additional reason for the reluctance to undergo Socrates' tests that Nicias has displayed.

90 We should at this point recall the metaphor with which Socrates initiated the discussion with Nicias (194c2-6); Nicias has indeed turned out to be incapable of that noble kind of courage, of running risks on behalf of another.

91 Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a-b8.

92 Cf. *Protagoras* 329d3-8.

93 Cf. *Meno* 73d9-75c1, 86e4-88d3.

94 Socrates says that Nicias has separated "about a third part" of courage. it is unclear whether Socrates simply says this because it follows from what he has just said to Nicias--that Nicias has defined courage as knowledge of future goods and evils, while all knowledge is of past, present, and future things--or whether Socrates really means to imply that Nicias has been speaking of only a third of courage. Socrates has mentioned what might constitute the other third of courage: quickness. Whether and to what extent this complicates my analysis, I'm not sure; but I do not think that it affects the basic argument.

95 As noted earlier, the dramatic date of the *Laches* falls somewhere between the battle of Delium in 324 and Laches' death in battle at Mantinea in 318; the dialogue finds both generals at home and at rest in the midst of the war which Thucydides called "the greatest motion that came into being among the Hellenes" (Thuc. 1.1). Might one not speculate that

the dialogue takes place during the peace which ended the Archimedean portion of that war, the so-called "Peace of Nicias"? And might one not be encouraged in such speculation by the consideration that the chance of peace between Nicias and Laches seems about as great as that which attended the peace between Athens and Sparta in 421?

96 It might be argued that Socrates' provision of a defense against ridicule is aimed as much at Laches as at Lysimachus; but if so, will this defense be adequate in Laches' view? Socrates first mentioned Homer in regards to Laches' first definition of courage; and there, Laches was not persuaded by Homer, but by an example of Lacedaemonian innovation. It is unlikely that Laches will be persuaded by Homer at this point as well.

As to whether Nicias will join, he has just indicated that he has already found a teacher, the sophist Damon.

97 *Theages*, 127bff.

98 And in light of this, we may tentatively suggest that Socrates meets Lysimachus' final request, that the god turns out to be willing.

99 Cf. *Theages* 122c7-d4 with 127d2ff. and 129eff.; see Leo Strauss, "On Plato's *Apology of Socrates* and *Crito*," in *Essays In Honor of Jacob Klein* (Annapolis: St. John's College Press, 1976), p. 160; Thomas Pangle, "Socrates On the Problem of Education In Political Science: An Interpretation of Plato's *Theages*," paper presented at the 79th Meeting of the American Political Science Association,Chicago, Illinois, September 1983, p. 27.

100 Cf. *Republic* 375a2-376b6.

101 Cf. *Apology* 20e4-22e5.

102 We should note, in this regard, that the *Laches* is pervaded by "twoness." To mention only the most obvious examples: two fathers, who are the sons of two men of political renown and similar political fortunes, and their two sons, consult with two generals who also suffer similar political fates.

103 Cf. *Republic* 557a9-c9

104 Are we then to conclude that Socrates is at least partly to blame for this? One interpretation of the only oath which Socrates utters in the dialogue may suggest as much: when Nicias speaks of what he has often heard Socrates say, Socrates appears genuinely surprised, not to say taken aback. Is this oath simply aimed at Laches, or has Socrates had an effect upon Nicias of which he has not previously aware? Perhaps Plato wrote dialogues because they enable one to exercise superior control over who hears what one says.

105 Cf. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 121-22.

106 Cf. *Apology* 29b9-30c3.

107 *Apology* 21c-e; cf. *Meno* 89d3-95a4.

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